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LADY ANNA.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE





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LADY ANNA.

VOL. II.



LADY ANNA.

BY
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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LADY ANNA.

CHAPTER XXV.

DANIEL THWAITE'S LETTER.

ON the day following that on which Daniel Thwaite had visited Lady Lovel in Keppel Street, the Countess received from him a packet containing a short note to herself, and the following letter addressed to Lady Anna. The enclosure was open, and in the letter addressed to the Countess the tailor simply asked her to read and to send on to her daughter that which he had written, adding that if she would do so he would promise to abide by any answer which might come to him in Lady Anna's own handwriting. Daniel Thwaite when he made this offer felt that he was giving up everything. Even though the words might be written by the girl, they would be dictated by the girl's mother, or by those lawyers who were now leagued together

to force her into a marriage with the Earl. But it was right, he thought,—and upon the whole best for all parties,—that he should give up everything. He could not bring himself to say so to the Countess or to any of those lawyers, when he was sent for and told that because of the lowliness of his position a marriage between him and the highly born heiress was impossible. On such occasions he revolted from the authority of those who endeavoured to extinguish him. But, when alone, he could see at any rate as clearly as they did, the difficulties which lay in his way. He also knew that there was a great gulf fixed, as Miss Alice Bluestone had said,—though he differed from the young lady as to the side of the gulf on which lay heaven, and on which heaven's opposite. The letter to Lady Anna was as follows ;—

“MY DEAREST,

“This letter if it reaches you at all will be given to you by your mother, who will have read it. It is sent to her open that she may see what I say to you. She sent for me and I went to her this evening, and she told me that it was impossible that I should ever be your husband. I was so bold as to tell her ladyship that there could be no impossibility. When you are of age you can walk

out from your mother's house and marry me, as can I you ; and no one can hinder us. There is nothing in the law, either of God or man, that can prevent you from becoming my wife,—if it be your wish to be so. But your mother also said that it was not your wish, and she went on to say that were you not bound to me by ties of gratitude you would willingly marry your cousin, Lord Lovel. Then I offered to meet you in the presence of your mother,—and in the presence too of Lord Lovel,—and to ask you then before all of us to which of us two your heart was given. And I promised that if in my presence you would stretch out your right hand to the Earl neither you nor your mother should be troubled further by Daniel Thwaite. But her ladyship swore to me, with an oath, that I should never be allowed to see you again.

“I therefore write to you, and bid you think much of what I say to you before you answer me. You know well that I love you. You do not suspect that I am trying to win you because you are rich. You will remember that I loved you when no one thought that you would be rich. I do love you in my heart of hearts. I think of you in my dreams and fancy then that all the world has become bright to me, because we are walking together, hand-in-hand, where none can come between to separate us.

But I would not wish you to be my wife, just because you have promised. If you do not love me, —above all, if you love this other man,—say so, and I will have done with it. Your mother says that you are bound to me by gratitude. I do not wish you to be my wife unless you are bound to me by love. Tell me then how it is;—but, as you value my happiness and your own, tell me the truth.

“I will not say that I shall think well of you, if you have been carried away by this young man’s nobility. I would have you give me a fair chance. Ask yourself what has brought him as a lover to your feet. How it came to pass that I was your lover you cannot but remember. But, for you, it is your first duty not to marry a man unless you love him. If you go to him because he can make you a countess you will be vile indeed. If you go to him because you find that he is in truth dearer to you than I am, because you prefer his arm to mine, because he has wound himself into your heart of hearts,—I shall think your heart indeed hardly worth the having; but according to your lights you will be doing right. In that case you shall have no further word from me to trouble you.

“But I desire that I may have an answer to this in your own handwriting.

“Your own sincere lover,

“DANIEL THWAITE.”

In composing and copying and recopying this letter the tailor sat up half the night, and then very early in the morning he himself carried it to Keppel Street, thus adding nearly three miles to his usual walk to Wigmore Street. The servant at the lodging-house was not up, and could hardly be made to rise by the modest appeals which Daniel made to the bell; but at last the delivery was effected, and the forlorn lover hurried back to his work.

The Countess as she sat at breakfast read the letter over and over again, and could not bring herself to decide whether it was right that it should be given to her daughter. She had not yet seen Lady Anna since she had sent the poor offender away from the house in anger, and had more than once repeated her assurance through Mrs. Bluestone that she would not do so till a promise had been given that the tailor should be repudiated. Should she make this letter an excuse for going to the house in Bedford Square, and of seeing her child, towards whom her very bowels were yearning? At this time, though she was a countess, with the prospect of great wealth, her condition was not enviable. From morning to night she was alone, unless when she would sit for an hour in Mr. Goffe's office, or on the rarer occasions of a visit to the chambers of

Serjeant Bluestone. She had no acquaintances in London whatever. She knew that she was unfitted for London society even if it should be open to her. She had spent her life in struggling with poverty and powerful enemies, — almost alone, — taking comfort in her happiest moments in the strength and goodness of her old friend Thomas Thwaite. She now found that those old days had been happier than these later days. Her girl had been with her and had been, — or had at any rate seemed to be, — true to her. She had something then to hope, something to expect, some happiness of glory to which she could look forward. But now she was beginning to learn, — nay had already learned, that there was nothing for her to expect. Her rank was allowed to her. She no longer suffered from want of money. Her cause was about to triumph, — as the lawyers on both sides had seemed to say. But in what respect would the triumph be sweet to her? Even should her girl become the Countess Lovel, she would not be the less isolated. None of the Lovels wanted her society. She had banished her daughter to Bedford Square, and the only effect of the banishment was that her daughter was less miserable in Bedford Square than she would have been with her mother in Keppel Street.

She did not dare to act without advice, and there-

fore she took the letter to Mr. Goffe. Had it not been for a few words towards the end of the letter she would have sent it to her daughter at once. But the man had said that her girl would be vile indeed if she married the Earl for 'the sake of becoming a countess, and the widow of the late Earl did not like to put such doctrine into the hands of Lady Anna. If she delivered the letter of course she would endeavour to dictate the answer;—but her girl could be stubborn as her mother; and how would it be with them if quite another letter should be written than that which the Countess would have dictated?

Mr. Goffe read the letter and said that he would like to consider it for a day. The letter was left with Mr. Goffe, and Mr. Goffe consulted the Serjeant. The Serjeant took the letter home to Mrs. Bluestone, and then another consultation was held. It found its way to the very house in which the girl was living for whom it was intended, but was not at last allowed to reach her hand. "It's a fine manly letter," said the Serjeant.

"Then the less proper to give it to her," said Mrs. Bluestone, whose heart was all softness towards Lady Anna, but as hard as a millstone towards the tailor.

"If she does like this young lord the best, why

shouldn't she tell the man the truth?" said the Serjeant.

"Of course she likes the young lord the best,—as is natural."

"Then in God's name let her say so, and put an end to all this trouble."

"You see, my dear, it isn't always easy to understand a girl's mind in such matters. I haven't a doubt which she likes best. She is not at all the girl to have a vitiated taste about young men. But you see this other man came first, and had the advantage of being her only friend at the time. She has felt very grateful to him, and as yet she is only beginning to learn the difference between gratitude and love. I don't at all agree with her mother as to being severe with her. I can't bear severity to young people, who ought to be made happy. But I am quite sure that this tailor should be kept away from her altogether. She must not see him or his handwriting. What would she say to herself if she got that letter? 'If he is generous, I can be generous too;' and if she ever wrote him a letter, pledging herself to him, all would be over. As it is, she has promised to write to Lord Lovel. We will hold her to that; and then, when she has given a sort of a promise to the Earl, we will take care that the tailor shall know it. It will be best

for all parties. What we have got to do is to save her from this man, who has been both her best friend and her worst enemy." Mrs. Bluestone was an excellent woman, and in this emergency was endeavouring to do her duty at considerable trouble to herself and with no hope of any reward. The future Countess when she should become a Countess would be nothing to her. She was a good woman;—but she did not care what evil she inflicted on the tailor, in her endeavours to befriend the daughter of the Countess.

The tailor's letter, unseen and undreamt of by Lady Anna, was sent back through the Serjeant and Mr. Goffe to Lady Lovel, with strong advice from Mr. Goffe that Lady Anna should not be allowed to see it. "I don't hesitate to tell you, Lady Lovel, that I have consulted the Serjeant, and that we are both of opinion that no intercourse whatever should be permitted between Lady Anna Lovel and Mr. Daniel Thwaite." The unfortunate letter was therefore sent back to the writer with the following note;—"The Countess Lovel presents her compliments to Mr. Daniel Thwaite, and thinks it best to return the enclosed. The Countess is of opinion that no intercourse whatever should take place between her daughter and Mr. Daniel Thwaite."

Then Daniel swore an oath to himself that the intercourse between them should not thus be made to cease. He had acted as he thought not only fairly but very honourably. Nay ;—he was by no means sure that that which had been intended for fairness and honour might not have been sheer simplicity. He had purposely abstained from any clandestine communication with the girl he loved,—even though she was one to whom he had had access all his life, with whom he had been allowed to grow up together ;—who had eaten of his bread and drank of his cup. Now her new friends,—and his own old friend the Countess,—would keep no measures with him. There was to be no intercourse whatever ! But, by the God of heaven, there should be intercourse !

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE KESWICK POET.

INFINITE difficulties were now complicating themselves on the head of poor Daniel Thwaite. The packet which the Countess addressed to him did not reach him in London, but was forwarded after him down to Cumberland, whither he had hurried on receipt of news from Keswick that his father was like to die. The old man had fallen in a fit, and when the message was sent it was not thought likely that he would ever see his son again. Daniel went down to the north as quickly as his means would allow him, going by steamer to Whitehaven, and thence by coach to Keswick. His entire wages were but thirty-five shillings a week, and on that he could not afford to travel by the mail to Keswick. But he did reach home in time to see his father alive, and to stand by the bedside when the old man died.

Though there was not time for many words

between them, and though the apathy of coming death had already clouded the mind of Thomas Thwaite, so that he, for the most part, disregarded,—as dying men do disregard,—those things which had been fullest of interest to him; still something was said about the Countess and Lady Anna. “Just don’t mind them any further, Dan,” said the father.

“Indeed that will be best,” said Daniel.

“Yes, in truth. What can they be to the likes o’ you? Give me a drop of brandy, Dan.” The drop of brandy was more to him now than the Countess; but though he thought but little of this last word, his son thought much of it. What could such as the Countess and her titled daughter be to him, Daniel Thwaite, the broken tailor? For, in truth, his father was dying, a broken man. There was as much owed by him in Keswick as all the remaining property would pay; and as for the business, it had come to that, that the business was not worth preserving.

The old tailor died and was buried, and all Keswick knew that he had left nothing behind him, except the debt that was due to him by the Countess, as to which, opinion in the world of Keswick varied very much. There were those who said that the two Thwaites, father and son, had known

very well on which side their bread was buttered, and that Daniel Thwaite would now, at his father's death, become the owner of bonds to a vast amount on the Lovel property. It was generally understood in Keswick that the Earl's claim was to be abandoned, that the rights of the Countess and her daughter were to be acknowledged, and that the Earl and his cousin were to become man and wife. If so the bonds would be paid, and Daniel Thwaite would become a rich man. Such was the creed of those who believed in the debt. But there were others who did not believe in the existence of any such bonds, and who ridiculed the idea of advances of money having been made. The old tailor had, no doubt, relieved the immediate wants of the Countess by giving her shelter and food, and had wasted his substance in making journeys, and neglecting his business; but that was supposed to be all. For such services on behalf of the father, it was not probable that much money would be paid to the son; and the less so, as it was known in Keswick that Daniel Thwaite had quarrelled with the Countess. As this latter opinion preponderated Daniel did not find that he was treated with any marked respect in his native town.

The old man did leave a will;—a very simple document, by which everything that he had was

left to his son. And there was this paragraph in it; "I expect that the Countess Lovel will repay to my son Daniel all moneys that I have advanced on her behalf." As for bonds,—or any single bond,—Daniel could find none. There was an account of certain small items due by the Countess, of long date, and there was her ladyship's receipt for a sum of £500, which had apparently been lent at the time of the trial for bigamy. Beyond this he could find no record of any details whatever, and it seemed to him that his claim was reduced to something less than £600. Nevertheless, he had understood from his father that the whole of the old man's savings had been spent on behalf of the two ladies, and he believed that some time since he had heard a sum named exceeding £6,000. In his difficulty he asked a local attorney, and the attorney advised him to throw himself on the generosity of the Countess. He paid the attorney some small fee, and made up his mind at once that he would not take the lawyer's advice. He would not throw himself on the generosity of the Countess.

There was then still living in that neighbourhood a great man, a poet, who had nearly carried to its close a life of great honour and of many afflictions. He was one who, in these, his latter days, eschewed all society, and cared to see no faces but

those of the surviving few whom he had loved in early life. And as those few survivors lived far away, and as he was but little given to move from home, his life was that of a recluse. Of the inhabitants of the place around him, who for the most part had congregated there since he had come among them, he saw but little, and his neighbours said that he was sullen and melancholic. But, according to their degrees, he had been a friend to Thomas Thwaite, and now, in his emergency, the son called upon the poet. Indifferent visitors, who might be and often were intruders, were but seldom admitted at that modest gate; but Daniel Thwaite was at once shown into the presence of the man of letters. They had not seen each other since Daniel was a youth, and neither would have known the other. The poet was hardly yet an old man, but he had all the characteristics of age. His shoulders were bent, and his eyes were deep set in his head, and his lips were thin and fast closed. But the beautiful oval of his face was still there, in spite of the ravages of years, of labours, and of sorrow; and the special brightness of his eye had not yet been dimmed. "I have been sorry, Mr. Thwaite, to hear of your father's death," said the poet. "I knew him well, but it was some years since, and I valued him as a man of singular probity and spirit."

Then Daniel craved permission to tell his story ;— and he told it all from the beginning to the end,— how his father and he had worked for the Countess and her girl, how their time and then their money had been spent for her ; how he had learned to love the girl, and how, as he believed, the girl had loved him. And he told with absolute truth the whole story, as far as he knew it, of what had been done in London during the last nine months. He exaggerated nothing, and did not scruple to speak openly of his own hopes. He showed his letter to the Countess, and her note to him, and while doing so hid none of his own feelings. Did the poet think that there was any reason why, in such circumstances, a tailor should not marry the daughter of a Countess ? And then he gave, as far as he knew it, the history of the money that had been advanced, and produced a copy of his father's will. “ And now, sir, what would you have me do ? ”

“ When you first spoke to the girl of love, should you not have spoken to the mother also, Mr. Thwaite ? ”

“ Would you, sir, have done so ? ”

“ I will not say that ;—but I think that I ought. Her girl was all that she had.”

“ It may be that I was wrong. But if the girl loves me now—— ”

“I would not hurt your feelings for the world, Mr. Thwaite.”

“Do not spare them, sir. I did not come to you that soft things might be said to me.”

“I do not think it of your father’s son. Seeing what is your own degree in life and what is theirs, that they are noble and of an old nobility, among the few hot-house plants of the nation, and that you are one of the people,—a blade of corn out of the open field, if I may say so,—born to eat your bread in the sweat of your brow, can you think that such a marriage would be other than distressing to them?”

“Is the hot-house plant stronger or better, or of higher use, than the ear of corn?”

“Have I said that it was, my friend? I will not say that either is higher in God’s sight than the other, or better, or of a nobler use. But they are different; and though the differences may verge together without evil when the limits are near, I do not believe in graftings so violent as this.”

“You mean, sir, that one so low as a tailor should not seek to marry so infinitely above himself as with the daughter of an Earl.”

“Yes, Mr. Thwaite, that is what I mean; though I hope that in coming to me you knew me well enough to be sure that I would not willingly offend you.”

“There is no offence;—there can be no offence. I am a tailor, and am in no sort ashamed of my trade. But I did not think, sir, that you believed in lords so absolutely as that.”

“I believe but in one Lord,” said the poet. “In Him who, in His wisdom and for His own purposes, made men of different degrees.”

“Has it been His doing, sir,—or the devil’s?”

“Nay, I will not discuss with you a question such as that. I will not at any rate discuss it now.”

“I have read, sir, in your earlier books——”

“Do not quote my books to me, either early or late. You ask me for advice, and I give it according to my ability. The time may come too, Mr. Thwaite,”—and this he said laughing,—“when you also will be less hot in your abhorrence of a nobility than you are now.”

“Never!”

“Ah;—’tis so that young men always make assurances to themselves of their own present wisdom.”

“You think then that I should give her up entirely?”

“I would leave her to herself, and to her mother,—and to this young lord, if he be her lover.”

“But if she loves me! Oh, sir, she did love me once. If she loves me, should I leave her to

think, as time goes on, that I have forgotten her? What chance can she have if I do not interfere to let her know that I am true to her?"

"She will have the chance of becoming Lady Lovel, and of loving her husband."

"Then, sir, you do not believe in vows of love?"

"How am I to answer that?" said the poet. "Surely I do believe in vows of love. I have written much of love, and have ever meant to write the truth, as I knew it, or thought that I knew it. But the love of which we poets sing is not the love of the outer world. It is more ecstatic, but far less serviceable. It is the picture of that which exists, but grand with imaginary attributes, as are the portraits of ladies painted by artists who have thought rather of their art than of their models. We tell of a constancy in love which is hardly compatible with the usages of this as yet imperfect world. Look abroad, and see whether girls do not love twice, and young men thrice. They come together, and rub their feathers like birds, and fancy that each has found in the other an eternity of weal or woe. Then come the causes of their parting. Their fathers perhaps are Capulets and Montagues, but their children, God be thanked, are not Romeos and Juliets. Or money does not serve, or distance

intervenes, or simply a new face has the poor merit of novelty. The constancy of which the poets sing is the unreal,—I may almost say the unnecessary,—constancy of a Juliet. The constancy on which our nature should pride itself is that of an Imogen. You read Shakespeare, I hope, Mr. Thwaite.”

“I know the plays you quote, sir. Imogen was a king’s daughter, and married a simple gentleman.”

“I would not say that early vows should mean nothing,” continued the poet, unwilling to take notice of the point made against him. “I like to hear that a girl has been true to her first kiss. But this girl will have the warrant of all the world to justify a second choice. And can you think that because your company was pleasant to her here among your native mountains, when she knew none but you, that she will be indifferent to the charms of such a one as you tell me this Lord Lovel is? She will have regrets,—remorse even; she will sorrow, because she knows that you have been good to her. But she will yield, and her life will be happier with him,—unless he be a bad man, which I do not know,—than it would be with you. Would there be no regrets, think you, no remorse, when she found that as your wife she had separated herself from all that she had been

taught to regard as delightful in this world? Would she be happy in quarrelling with her mother and her new-found relatives? You think little of noble blood, and perhaps I think as little of it in matters relating to myself. But she is noble, and she will think of it. As for your money, Mr. Thwaite, I should make it a matter of mere business with the Countess, as though there was no question relating to her daughter. She probably has an account of the money, and doubtless will pay you when she has means at her disposal."

Daniel left his Mentor without another word on his own behalf, expressing thanks for the counsel that had been given to him, and assuring the poet that he would endeavour to profit by it. Then he walked away, over the very paths on which he had been accustomed to stray with Anna Lovel, and endeavoured to digest the words that he had heard. He could not bring himself to see their truth. That he should not force the girl to marry him, if she loved another better than she loved him, simply by the strength of her own obligation to him, he could understand. But that it was natural that she should transfer to another the affection that she had once bestowed upon him, because that other was a lord, he would not allow. Not only his heart but all his intellect rebelled against

such a decision. A transfer so violent would, he thought, show that she was incapable of loving. And yet this doctrine had come to him from one who, as he himself had said, had written much of love.

But, though he argued after this fashion with himself, the words of the old poet had had their efficacy. Whether the fault might be with the girl, or with himself, or with the untoward circumstances of the case, he determined to teach himself that he had lost her. He would never love another woman. Though the Earl's daughter could not be true to him, he, the suitor, would be true to the Earl's daughter. There might no longer be Romeos among the noble Capulets and the noble Montagues,—whom indeed he believed to be dead to faith; but the salt of truth had not therefore perished from the world. He would get what he could from this wretched wreck of his father's property,—obtain payment if it might be possible of that poor £500 for which he held the receipt,—and then go to some distant land in which the wisest of counsellors would not counsel him that he was unfit because of his trade to mate himself with noble blood.

When he had proved his father's will he sent a copy of it up to the Countess with the following letter ;—

“ Keswick, November 4, 183—.

“ MY LADY,

“ I do not know whether your ladyship will yet have heard of my father’s death. He died here on the 24th of last month. He was taken with apoplexy on the 15th, and never recovered from the fit. I think you will be sorry for him.

“ I find myself bound to send your ladyship a copy of his will. Your ladyship perhaps may have some account of what money has passed between you and him. I have none except a receipt for £500 given to you by him many years ago. There is also a bill against your ladyship for £71 18s. 9d. It may be that no more is due than this, but you will know. I shall be happy to hear from your ladyship on the subject, and am,

“ Yours respectfully,

“ DANIEL THWAITE.”

But he still was resolved that before he departed for the far western land he would obtain from Anna Lovel herself an expression of her determination to renounce him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY ANNA'S LETTER.

IN the mean time the week had gone round, and Lady Anna's letter to the Earl had not yet been written. An army was arrayed against the girl to induce her to write such a letter as might make it almost impossible for her afterwards to deny that she was engaged to the lord, but the army had not as yet succeeded. The Countess had not seen her daughter,—had been persistent in her refusal to let her daughter come to her till she had at any rate repudiated her other suitor ; but she had written a strongly worded but short letter, urging it as a great duty that Lady Anna Lovel was bound to support her family and to defend her rank. Mrs. Bluestone, from day to day, with soft loving words taught the same lesson. Alice Bluestone in their daily conversations spoke of the tailor, or rather of this promise to the tailor, with a horror which at any rate was not affected. The Serjeant, almost

with tears in his eyes, implored her to put an end to the lawsuit. Even the Solicitor-General sent her tender messages,—expressing his great hope that she might enable them to have this matter adjusted early in November. All the details of the case as it now stood had been explained to her over and over again. If, when the day fixed for the trial should come round, it could be said that she and the young Earl were engaged to each other, the Earl would altogether abandon his claim,—and no further statement would be made. The fact of the marriage in Cumberland would then be proved,—the circumstances of the trial for bigamy would be given in evidence,—and all the persons concerned would be together anxious that the demands of the two ladies should be admitted in full. It was the opinion of the united lawyers that were this done, the rank of the Countess would be allowed, and that the property left behind him by the old lord would be at once given up to those who would inherit it under the order of things as thus established. The Countess would receive that to which she would be entitled as widow, the daughter would be the heir-at-law to the bulk of the personal property, and the Earl would merely claim any real estate, if,—as was very doubtful,—any real estate had been left in question. In this case the disposi-

tion of the property would be just what they would all desire, and the question of rank would be settled for ever. But if the young lady should not have then agreed to this very pleasant compromise, the Earl indeed would make no further endeavours to invalidate the Cumberland marriage, and would retire from the suit. But it would then be stated that there was a claimant in Sicily,—or at least evidence in Italy, which if sifted might possibly bar the claim of the Countess. The Solicitor-General did not hesitate to say that he believed the living woman to be a weak impostor, who had been first used by the Earl and had then put forward a falsehood to get an income out of the property; but he was by no means convinced that the other foreign woman, whom the Earl had undoubtedly made his first wife, might not have been alive when the second marriage was contracted. If it were so, the Countess would be no Countess, Anna Lovel would simply be Anna Murray, penniless, baseborn, and a fit wife for the tailor, should the tailor think fit to take her. “If it be so,” said Lady Anna through her tears, “let it be so; and he will take me.”

It may have been that the army was too strong for its own purpose,—too much of an army to gain a victory on that field,—that a weaker combination

of forces would have prevailed when all this array failed. No one had a word to say for the tailor; no one admitted that he had been a generous friend; no feeling was expressed for him. It seemed to be taken for granted that he, from the beginning, had laid his plans for obtaining possession of an enormous income in the event of the Countess being proved to be a Countess. There was no admission that he had done aught for love. Now, in all these matters, Lady Anna was sure of but one thing alone, and that was of the tailor's truth. Had they acknowledged that he was good and noble, they might perhaps have persuaded her,—as the poet had almost persuaded her lover,—that the fitness of things demanded that they should be separated.

But she had promised that she would write the letter by the end of the week, and when the end of a fortnight had come she knew that it must be written. She had declared over and over again to Mrs. Bluestone that she must go away from Bedford Square. She could not live there always, she said. She knew that she was in the way of everybody. Why should she not go back to her own mother? "Does mamma mean to say that I am never to live with her any more?" Mrs. Bluestone promised that if she would write her letter and tell

her cousin that she would try to love him, she should go back to her mother at once. "But I cannot live here always," persisted Lady Anna. Mrs. Bluestone would not admit that there was any reason why her visitor should not continue to live in Bedford Square as long as the arrangement suited Lady Level.

Various letters were written for her. The Countess wrote one which was an unqualified acceptance of the Earl's offer, and which was very short. Alice Bluestone wrote one which was full of poetry. Mrs. Bluestone wrote a third, in which a great many ambiguous words were used,—in which there was no definite promise, and no poetry. But had this letter been sent it would have been almost impossible for the girl afterwards to extricate herself from its obligations. The Serjeant, perhaps, had lent a word or two, for the letter was undoubtedly very clever. In this letter Lady Anna was made to say that she would always have the greatest pleasure in receiving her cousin's visits, and that she trusted that she might be able to co-operate with her cousins in bringing the lawsuit to a close;—that she certainly would not marry any one without her mother's consent, but that she did not find herself able at the present to say more than that. "It won't stop the Solicitor-General, you

know," the Serjeant had remarked, as he read it. "Bother the Solicitor-General!" Mrs. Bluestone had answered, and had then gone on to show that it would lead to that which would stop the learned gentleman. The Serjeant had added a word or two, and great persuasion was used to induce Lady Anna to use this epistle.

But she would have none of it. "Oh, I couldn't, Mrs. Bluestone;—he would know that I hadn't written all that."

"You have promised to write, and you are bound to keep your promise," said Mrs. Bluestone.

"I believe I am bound to keep all my promises," said Lady Anna, thinking of those which she had made to Daniel Thwaite.

But at last she sat down and did write a letter for herself, specially premising that no one should see it. When she had made her promise, she certainly had not intended to write that which should be shown to all the world. Mrs. Bluestone had begged that at any rate the Countess might see it. "If mamma will let me go to her, of course I will show it her," said Lady Anna. At last it was thought best to allow her to write her own letter and to send it unseen. After many struggles and with many tears she wrote her letter as follows;—

“ Bedford Square, Tuesday.

“ MY DEAR COUSIN,

“ I am sorry that I have been so long in doing what I said I would do. I don't think I ought to have promised, for I find it very difficult to say anything, and I think that it is wrong that I should write at all. It is not my fault that there should be a lawsuit. I do not want to take anything away from anybody, or to get anything for myself. I think papa was very wicked when he said that mamma was not his wife, and of course I wish it may all go as she wishes. But I don't think anybody ought to ask me to do what I feel to be wrong.

“ Mr. Daniel Thwaite is not at all such a person as they say. He and his father have been mamma's best friends, and I shall never forget that. Old Mr. Thwaite is dead, and I am very sorry to hear it. If you had known them as we did you would understand what I feel. Of course he is not your friend; but he is my friend, and I dare say that makes me unfit to be friends with you. You are a nobleman and he is a tradesman; but when we knew him first he was quite as good as we, and I believe we owe him a great deal of money, which mamma can't pay him. I have heard mamma say before she was angry with him, that she would have

been in the workhouse, but for them, and that Mr. Daniel Thwaite might now be very well off, and not a working tailor at all as Mrs. Bluestone calls him, if they hadn't given all they had to help us. I cannot bear after that to hear them speak of him as they do.

“Of course I should like to do what mamma wants; but how would you feel if you had promised somebody else? I do so wish that all this might be stopped altogether. My dear mamma will not allow me to see her; and though everybody is very kind, I feel that I ought not to be here with Mrs. Bluestone. Mamma talked of going abroad somewhere. I wish she would, and take me away. I should see nobody then, and there would be no trouble. But I suppose she hasn't got enough money. This is a very poor letter, but I do not know what else I can say.

“Believe me to be,

“My dear cousin,

“Yours affectionately,

“ANNA LOVEL.”

Then came, in a postscript, the one thing that she had to say,—“I think that I ought to be allowed to see Mr. Daniel Thwaite.”

Lord Lovel after receiving this letter called in

Bedford Square and saw Mrs. Bluestone,—but he did not show the letter. His cousin was out with the girls and he did not wait to see her. He merely said that he had received a letter which had not given him much comfort. “But I shall answer it,” he said,—and the reader who has seen the one letter shall see also the other.

“Brown’s Hotel, Albemarle Street,
4th November, 183—.

“DEAREST ANNA,

“I have received your letter and am obliged to you for it, though there is so little in it to flatter or to satisfy me. I will begin by assuring you that, as far as I am concerned, I do not wish to keep you from seeing Mr. Daniel Thwaite. I believe in my heart of hearts that if you were now to see him often you would feel aware that a union between you and him could not make either of you happy. You do not even say that you think it would do so.

“You defend him, as though I had accused him. I grant all that you say in his favour. I do not doubt that his father behaved to you and to your mother with true friendship. But that will not make him fit to be the husband of Anna Lovel. You do not even say that you think that he would be fit. I fancy I understand it all, and I love you

better for the pride with which you cling to so firm a friend.

“ But, dearest, it is different when we talk of marriage. I imagine that you hardly dare now to think of becoming his wife. I doubt whether you say even to yourself that you love him with that kind of love. Do not suppose me vain enough to believe that therefore you must love me. It is not that. But if you would once tell yourself that he is unfit to be your husband, then you might come to love me, and would not be the less willing to do so, because all your friends wish it. It must be something to you that you should be able to put an end to all this trouble.

“ Yours, dearest Anna,

“ Most affectionately,

“ L.

“ I called in Bedford Square this morning, but you were not at home ! ”

“ But I do dare,” she said to herself, when she had read the letter. “ Why should I not dare ? And I do say to myself that I love him. Why should I not love him now, when I was not ashamed to love him before ? ” She was being persecuted ; and as the step of the wayfarer brings out the sweet

scent of the herb which he crushes with his heel, so did persecution with her extract from her heart that strength of character which had hitherto been latent. Had they left her at Yoxham, and said never a word to her about the tailor; had the rector and the two aunts showered soft courtesies on her head,—they might have vanquished her. But now the spirit of opposition was stronger within her than ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LOVEL V. MURRAY AND ANOTHER.

MONDAY, the 9th of November, was the day set down for the trial of the case which had assumed the name of "Lovel versus Murray and Another." This denomination had been adopted many months ago, when it had been held to be practicable by the Lovel party to prove that the lady who was now always called the Countess, was not entitled to bear the name of Lovel, but was simply Josephine Murray, and her daughter simply Anna Murray. Had there been another wife alive when the mother was married that name and that name only could have been hers, whether she had been the victim of the old Earl's fraud,—or had herself been a party to it. The reader will have understood that as the case went on the opinions of those who acted for the young Earl, and more especially the opinion of the young Earl himself, had been changed. Prompted to do so by various motives, they, who

had undertaken to prove that the Countess was no Countess, had freely accorded to her her title, and had themselves entertained her daughter with all due acknowledgment of rank and birth. Nevertheless the name of the case remained and had become common in people's mouths. The very persons who would always speak of the Countess Lovel spoke also very familiarly of the coming trial in "Lovel v. Murray," and now the 9th of November had come round and the case of "Lovel v. Murray and Another" was to be tried. The nature of the case was this. The two ladies, mother and daughter, had claimed the personal property of the late lord as his widow and daughter. Against that claim Earl Lovel made his claim, as heir-at-law, alleging that there was no widow, and no legitimate child. The case had become infinitely complicated by the alleged existence of the first wife,—in which case she as widow would have inherited. But still the case went on as Lovel v. Murray,—the Lovel so named being the Earl, and not the alleged Italian widow.

Such being the question presumably at issue, it became the duty of the Solicitor-General to open the pleadings. In the ordinary course of proceeding it would have been his task to begin by explaining the state of the family, and by assuming

that he could prove the former marriage and the existence of the former wife at the time of the latter marriage. His evidence would have been subject to cross-examination, and then another counter-statement would have been made on behalf of the Countess, and her witnesses would have been brought forward. When all this had been done the judge would have charged the jury, and with the jury would have rested the decision. This would have taken many days, and all the joys and sorrows, all the mingled hopes and anxieties of a long trial had been expected. Bets had been freely made, odds being given at first on behalf of Lord Lovel, and afterwards odds on behalf of the Countess. Interest had been made to get places in the court, and the clubs had resounded now with this fact and now with that which had just been brought home from Sicily as certain. Then had come suddenly upon the world the tidings that there would absolutely be no trial, that the great case of "Lovel v. Murray and Another" was to be set at rest for ever by the marriage of "Lovel" with "Another," and by the acceptance by "Lovel" of "Murray" as his mother-in-law. But the quidnuncs would not accept this solution. No doubt Lord Lovel might marry the second party in the defence, and it was admitted on all hands that he probably would

do so;—but that would not stop the case. If there were an Italian widow living, that widow was the heir to the property. Another Lovel would take the place of Lord Lovel,—and the cause of Lovel v. Murray must still be continued. The first marriage could not be annulled, simply by the fact that it would suit the young Earl that it should be annulled. Then, while this dispute was in progress, it was told at all the clubs that there was to be no marriage,—that the girl had got herself engaged to a tailor, and that the tailor's mastery over her was so strong that she did not dare to shake him off. Dreadful things were told about the tailor and poor Lady Anna. There had been a secret marriage; there was going to be a child;—the latter fact was known as a certain fact to a great many men at the clubs;—the tailor had made everything safe in twenty different ways. He was powerful over the girl equally by love, by fear, and by written bond. The Countess had repelled her daughter from her house by turning her out into the street by night, and had threatened both murder and suicide. Half the fortune had been offered to the tailor, in vain. The romance of the story had increased greatly during the last few days preceding the trial,—but it was admitted by all that the trial as a trial would

be nothing. There would probably be simply an adjournment.

It would be hard to say how the story of the tailor leaked out, and became at last public and notorious. It had been agreed among all the lawyers that it should be kept secret,—but it may perhaps have been from some one attached to them that it was first told abroad. No doubt all Norton and Flick knew it, and all Goffe and Goffe. Mr. Mainsail and his clerk, Mr. Hardy and his clerk, Serjeant Bluestone and his clerk, all knew it; but they had all promised secrecy. The clerk of the Solicitor-General was of course beyond suspicion. The two Miss Bluestones had known the story, but they had solemnly undertaken to be silent as the grave. Mrs. Bluestone was a lady with most intimately confidential friends,—but she was sworn to secrecy. It might have come from Sarah, the lady's-maid, whom the Countess had unfortunately attached to her daughter when the first gleam of prosperity had come upon them.

Among the last who heard the story of the tailor,—the last of any who professed the slightest interest in the events of the Lovel family,—were the Lovels of Yoxham. The Earl had told them nothing. In answer to his aunt's letters, and then in answer to a very urgent appeal from his uncle, the young

nobleman had sent only the most curt and most ambiguous replies. When there was really something to tell he would tell everything, but at present he could only say that he hoped that everything would be well. That had been the extent of the information given by the Earl to his relations, and the rector had waxed wrathful. Nor was his wrath lessened, or the sorrow of the two aunts mitigated, when the truth reached them by the mouth of that very Lady Fitzwarren who had been made to walk out of the room after—Anna Murray, as Lady Fitzwarren persisted in calling the “young person” after she had heard the story of the tailor. She told the story at Yoxham parsonage to the two aunts, and brought with her a printed paragraph from a newspaper to prove the truth of it. As it is necessary that we should now hurry into the court to hear what the Solicitor-General had to say about the case, we cannot stop to sympathize with the grief of the Lovels at Yoxham. We may, however, pause for a moment to tell the burden of the poor rector’s song for that evening. “I knew how it would be from the beginning. I told you so. I was sure of it. But nobody would believe me.”

The Court of Queen’s Bench at Westminster was crowded on the 9th of November. The case was to be heard before the Lord Chief Justice, and it

was known that at any rate Sir William Patterson would have something to tell. If nothing else came of it, the telling of that story would be worth the hearing. All the preliminaries of the trial went on, as though every one believed that it was to be carried through to the bitter end,—as though evidence were to be adduced and rebutted, and further contradicted by other evidence, which would again be rebutted with that pleasing animosity between rival lawyers, which is so gratifying to the outside world, and apparently to themselves also. The jurors were sworn in,—a special jury,—and long was the time taken, and many the threats made by the Chief Justice, before twelve gentlemen would consent to go into the box. Crowds were round the doors of the court, of which every individual man would have paid largely for standing-room to hear the trial; but when they were wanted for use, men would not come forward to accept a seat, with all that honour which belongs to a special jurymen. And yet it was supposed that at last there would be no question to submit to a jury.

About noon the Solicitor began his statement. He was full of smiles and nods and pleasant talk, gestures indicative of a man who had a piece of work before him in which he could take delight. It is always satisfactory to see the assurance of a

cock crowing in his own farm-yard, and to admire his easy familiarity with things that are awful to a stranger bird. If you, O reader, or I were bound to stand up in that court, dressed in wig and gown, and to tell a story that would take six hours in the telling, the one or the other of us knowing it to be his special duty so to tell it that judge, and counsellors, and jury, should all catch clearly every point that was to be made,—how ill would that story be told, how would those points escape the memory of the teller, and never come near the intellect of the hearers! And how would the knowledge that it would be so, confuse your tongue or mine,—and make exquisitely miserable that moment of rising before the audience! But our Solicitor-General rose to his legs a happy man, with all that grace of motion, that easy slowness, that unassumed confidence which belongs to the ordinary doings of our familiar life. Surely he must have known that he looked well in his wig and gown, as with low voice and bent neck, with only half-suppressed laughter, he whispered into the ears of the gentleman who sat next to him some pleasant joke that had just occurred to him. He could do that, though the eyes of all the court were upon him; so great was the man! And then he began with a sweet low voice, almost modest in

its tones. For a few moments it might have been thought that some young woman was addressing the court, so gentle, so dulcet were the tones.

“ My lord, it is my intention on this occasion to do that which an advocate can seldom do,—to make a clean breast of it, to tell the court and the jury all that I know of this case, all that I think of it, and all that I believe,—and in short to state a case as much in the interest of my opponents as of my clients. The story with which I must occupy the time of the court, I fear, for the whole remainder of the day, with reference to the Lovel family, is replete with marvels and romance. I shall tell you of great crimes and of singular virtues, of sorrows that have been endured and conquered, and of hopes that have been nearly realised; but the noble client on whose behalf I am here called upon to address you, is not in any manner the hero of this story. His heroism will be shown to consist in this,—unless I mar the story in telling it,—that he is only anxious to establish the truth, whether that truth be for him or against him. We have now to deal with an ancient and noble family, of which my client, the present Earl Lovel, is at this time the head and chief. On the question now before us depends the possession of immense wealth. Should this trial be carried to its natural conclu-

sion it will be for you to decide whether this wealth belongs to him as the heir-at-law of the late Earl, or whether there was left some nearer heir when that Earl died, whose rightful claim would bar that of my client. But there is more to be tried than this,—and on that more depends the right of two ladies to bear the name of Lovel. Such right, or the absence of such right, would in this country of itself be sufficient to justify, nay, to render absolutely necessary, some trial before a jury in any case of well-founded doubt. Our titles of honour bear so high a value among us, are so justly regarded as the outward emblem of splendour and noble conduct, are recognised so universally as passports to all society, that we are naturally prone to watch their assumption with a caution most exact and scrupulous. When the demand for such honour is made on behalf of a man it generally includes the claim to some parliamentary privilege, the right to which has to be decided not by a jury, but by the body to which that privilege belongs. The claim to a peerage must be tried before the House of Lords,—if made by a woman as by a man, because the son of the heiress would be a peer of Parliament. In the case with which we are now concerned no such right is in question. The lady who claims to be the Countess Lovel, and her

daughter who claims to be Lady Anna Lovel, make no demand which renders necessary other decision than that of a jury. It is as though any female commoner in the land claimed to have been the wife of an alleged husband. But not the less is the claim made to a great and a noble name; and as a grave doubt has been thrown upon the justice of the demand made by these ladies, it has become the duty of my client as the head of the Lovels, as being himself, without any doubt, the Earl Lovel of the day, to investigate the claim made, and to see that no false pretenders are allowed to wear the highly prized honours of his family. Independently of the great property which is at stake, the nature of which it will be my duty to explain to you, the question at issue whether the elder lady be or be not Countess Lovel, and whether the younger lady be or be not Lady Anna Lovel, has demanded the investigation which could not adequately have been made without this judicial array. I will now state frankly to you our belief that these two ladies are fully entitled to the names which they claim to bear; and I will add to that statement a stronger assurance of my own personal conviction and that of my client that they themselves are fully assured of the truth and justice of their demand. I think it right also to let you know that since these in-

quiries were first commenced, since the day for this trial was fixed, the younger of these ladies has been residing with the uncle of my client, under the same roof with my client, as an honoured and most welcome guest; and there, in the face of the whole country, has received that appellation of nobility from all the assembled members of my client's family, to dispute which I apparently now stand before you on that client's behalf." The rector of Yoxham, who was in court, shook his head vehemently when the statement was made that Lady Anna had been his welcome guest; but nobody was then regarding the rector of Yoxham, and he shook his head in vain.

"You will at once ask why, if this be so, should the trial be continued. 'As all is thus conceded,' you will say, 'that these two ladies claim, whom in your indictment you have misnamed Murray, why not, in God's name, give them their privileges, and the wealth which should appertain to them, and release them from the persecution of judicial proceedings?' In the first place I must answer that neither my belief, nor that of my friends who are acting with me, nor even that of my noble client himself, is sufficient to justify us in abstaining from seeking a decision which shall be final as against further claimants. If the young Earl should die,

then would there be another Earl, and that other Earl might also say, with grounds as just as those on which we have acted, that the lady, whom I shall henceforward call the Countess Lovel, is no Countess. We think that she is,—but it will be for you to decide whether she is or is not, after hearing the evidence which will, no doubt, be adduced of her marriage,—and any evidence to the contrary which other parties may bring before you. We shall adduce no evidence to the contrary, nor do I think it probable that we shall ask a single question to shake that with which my learned friend opposite is no doubt prepared. In fact, there is no reason why my learned friend and I should not sit together, having our briefs and our evidence in common. And then, as the singular facts of this story become clear to you,—as I trust that I may be able to make them clear,—you will learn that there are other interests at stake beyond those of my client and of the two ladies who appear here as his opponents. Two statements have been made tending to invalidate the rights of Countess Lovel, —both having originated with one who appears to have been the basest and blackest human being with whose iniquities my experience as a lawyer has made me conversant. I speak of the late Earl. It was asserted by him, almost from the date of his

marriage with the lady who is now his widow,—falsely stated, as I myself do not doubt,—that when he married her he had a former wife living. But it is, I understand, capable of absolute proof that he also stated that this former wife died soon after that second marriage,—which in such event would have been but a mock marriage. Were such the truth,—should you come to the belief that the late Earl spoke truth in so saying,—the whole property at issue would become the undisputed possession of my client. The late Earl died intestate, the will which he did leave having been already set aside by my client as having been made when the Earl was mad. The real wife, according to this story, would be dead. The second wife, according to this story, would be no wife,—and no widow. The daughter, according to this story, would be no daughter in the eye of the law,—would, at any rate, be no heiress. The Earl would be the undisputed heir to the personal property, as he is to the real property and to the title. But we disbelieve this story utterly,—we intend to offer no evidence to show that the first wife,—for there was such a wife,—was living when the second marriage was contracted. We have no such evidence, and believe that none such can be found. Then that recreant nobleman, in whose breast there was no touch of

nobility, in whose heart was no spark of mercy, made a second statement,—to this effect—that his first wife had not died at all. His reason for this it is hardly for us to seek. He may have done so, as affording a reason why he should not go through a second marriage ceremony with the lady whom he had so ill used. But that he did make this statement is certain,—and it is also certain that he allowed an income to a certain woman as though to a wife, that he allowed her to be called the Countess, though he was then living with another Italian woman; and it is also certain that this woman is still living,—or at least that she was living some week or two ago. We believe her to have been an elder sister of her who was the first wife, and whose death occurred before the second marriage. Should it be proved that this living woman was the legitimate wife of the late Earl, not only would the right be barred of those two English ladies to whom all our sympathies are now given, but no portion of the property in dispute would go either to them or to my client. I am told that before his lordship, the Chief Justice, shall have left the case in your hands, an application will be made to the court on behalf of that living lady. I do not know how that may be, but I am so informed. If such application be made,

—if there be any attempt to prove that she should inherit as widow,—then will my client again contest the case. We believe that the Countess Lovel, the English Countess, is the widow, and that Lady Anna Lovel is Lady Anna Lovel, and is the heiress. Against them we will not struggle. As was our bounden duty, we have sent not once only, but twice and thrice, to Italy and to Sicily in search of evidence which, if true, would prove that the English Countess was no Countess. We have failed, and have no evidence which we think it right to ask a jury to believe. We think that a mass of falsehood has been heaped together among various persons in a remote part of a foreign country, with the view of obtaining money, all of which was grounded on the previous falsehoods of the late Earl. We will not use these falsehoods with the object of disputing a right in the justice of which we have ourselves the strongest confidence. We withdraw from any such attempt.

“But as yet I have only given you the preliminaries of my story.” He had, in truth, told his story. He had, at least, told all of it that it will import that the reader should hear. He, indeed, —unfortunate one,—will have heard the most of that story twice or thrice before. But the audience in the Court of Queen’s Bench still listened with

breathless attention, while, under this new head of his story he told every detail again with much greater length than he had done in the prelude which has been here given. He stated the facts of the Cumberland marriage, apologizing to his learned friend the Serjeant for taking, as he said, the very words out of his learned friend's mouth. He expatiated with an eloquence that was as vehement as it was touching on the demoniacal schemes of that wicked Earl, to whom, during the whole of his fiendish life, women had been a prey. He repudiated, with a scorn that was almost terrible in its wrath, the idea that Josephine Murray had gone to the Earl's house with the name of wife, knowing that she was, in fact, but a mistress. She herself was in court, thickly veiled, under the care of one of the Goffes, having been summoned there as a necessary witness, and could not control her emotion as she listened to the words of warm eulogy with which the adverse counsel told the history of her life. It seemed to her then that justice was at last being done to her. Then the Solicitor-General reverted again to the two Italian women,—the Sicilian sisters, as he called them,—and at much length gave his reasons for discrediting the evidence which he himself had sought, that he might use it with the object of establishing the claim of

his client. And lastly, he described the nature of the possessions which had been amassed by the late Earl, who, black with covetousness as he was with every other sin, had so manipulated his property that almost the whole of it had become personal, and was thus inheritable by a female heiress. He knew, he said, that he was somewhat irregular in alluding to facts,—or to fiction, if any one should call it fiction,—which he did not intend to prove, or to attempt to prove; but there was something, he said, beyond the common in the aspect which this case had taken, something in itself so irregular, that he thought he might perhaps be held to be excused in what he had done. “For the sake of the whole Lovel family, for the sake of these two most interesting ladies, who have been subjected, during a long period of years, to most undeserved calamities, we are anxious to establish the truth. I have told you what we believe to be the truth, and as that in no single detail militates against the case as it will be put forward by my learned friends opposite, we have no evidence to offer. We are content to accept the marriage of the widowed Countess as a marriage in every respect legal and binding.” So saying the Solicitor-General sat down.

It was then past five o'clock, and the court, as a

matter of course, was adjourned, but it was adjourned by consent to the Wednesday, instead of to the following day, in order that there might be due consideration given to the nature of the proceedings that must follow. As the thing stood at present it seemed that there need be no further plea of "Lovel v. Murray and Another." It had been granted that Murray was not Murray, but Lovel; yet it was thought that something further would be done.

It had all been very pretty; but yet there had been a feeling of disappointment throughout the audience. Not a word had been said as to that part of the whole case which was supposed to be the most romantic. Not a word had been said about the tailor.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DANIEL THWAITE ALONE.

THERE were two persons in the court who heard the statement of the Solicitor-General with equal interest,—and perhaps with equal disapprobation,—whose motives and ideas on the subject were exactly opposite. These two were the Rev. Mr. Lovel, the uncle of the plaintiff, and Daniel Thwaite, the tailor, whose whole life had been passed in furthering the cause of the defendants. The parson, from the moment in which he had heard that the young lady whom he had entertained in his house had engaged herself to marry the tailor, had reverted to his old suspicions,—suspicions which, indeed, he had never altogether laid aside. It had been very grievous to him to prefer a doubtful Lady Anna to a most indubitable Lady Fitzwarren. He liked the old-established things,—things which had always been unsuspected, which were not only respectable but firm-rooted. For twenty years he had been certain

that the Countess was a false countess ; and he, too, had lamented with deep inward lamentation over the loss of the wealth which ought to have gone to support the family earldom. It was monstrous to him that the property of one Earl Lovel should not appertain to the next Earl. He would on the moment have had the laws with reference to the succession of personal property altered, with retrospective action, so that so great an iniquity should be impossible. When the case against the so-called Countess was, as it were, abandoned by the Solicitor-General, and the great interests at stake thrown up, he would have put the conduct of the matter into other hands. Then had come upon him the bitterness of having to entertain in his own house the now almost undisputed,—though by him still suspected,—heiress, on behalf of his nephew, of a nephew who did not treat him well. And now the heiress had shown what she really was by declaring her intention of marrying a tailor ! When that became known, he did hope that the Solicitor-General would change his purpose and fight the cause.

The ladies of the family, the two aunts, had affected to disbelieve the paragraph which Lady Fitzwarren had shown them with so much triumph. The rector had declared that it was just the kind of thing that he had expected. Aunt Julia, speaking

freely, had said that it was just the kind of thing which she, knowing the girl, could not believe. Then the rector had come up to town to hear the trial, and on the day preceding it had asked his nephew as to the truth of the rumour which had reached him. "It is true," said the young lord, knitting his brow, "but it had better not be talked about."

"Why not talked about? All the world knows it. It has been in the newspapers."

"Any one wishing to oblige me will not mention it," said the Earl. This was too bad. It could not be possible,—for the honour of all the Lovels it could not surely be possible,—that Lord Lovel was still seeking the hand of a young woman who had confessed that she was engaged to marry a journeyman tailor! And yet to him, the uncle,—to him who had not long since been in loco parentis to the lord,—the lord would vouchsafe no further reply than that above given! The rector almost made himself believe that, great as might be the sorrow caused by such disruption, it would become his duty to quarrel with the Head of his family!

He listened with most attentive ears to every word spoken by the Solicitor-General, and quarrelled with almost every word. Would not any one have imagined that this advocate had been paid to plead

the cause, not of the Earl, but of the Countess? As regarded the interests of the Earl, everything was surrendered. Appeal was made for the sympathies of all the court,—and, through the newspapers, for the sympathies of all England,—not on behalf of the Earl who was being defrauded of his rights, but on behalf of the young woman who had disgraced the name which she pretended to call her own,—and whose only refuge from that disgrace must be in the fact that to that name she had no righteous claim! Even when this apostate barrister came to a recapitulation of the property at stake, and explained the cause of its being vested, not in land as is now the case with the bulk of the possessions of noble lords,—but in shares and funds and ventures of commercial speculation here and there, after the fashion of tradesmen,—he said not a word to stir up in the minds of the jury a feeling of the injury which had been done to the present Earl. “Only that I am told that he has a wife of his own I should think that he meant to marry one of the women himself,” said the indignant rector in the letter which he wrote to his sister Julia.

And the tailor was as indignant as the rector. He was summoned as a witness and was therefore bound to attend,—at the loss of his day’s work. When he reached the court, which he did long

before the judge had taken his seat, he found it to be almost impossible to effect an entrance. He gave his name to some officer about the place, but learned that his name was altogether unknown. He showed his subpoena and was told that he must wait till he was called. "Where must I wait?" asked the angry radical. "Anywhere," said the man in authority; "but you can't force your way in here." Then he remembered that no one had as yet paid so dearly for this struggle, no one had suffered so much, no one had been so instrumental in bringing the truth to light, as he, and this was the way in which he was treated! Had there been any justice in those concerned a seat would have been provided for him in the court, even though his attendance had not been required. There were hundreds there, brought thither by simple curiosity, to whom priority of entrance into the court had been accorded by favour, because they were wealthy, or because they were men of rank, or because they had friends high in office. All his wealth had been expended in this case; it was he who had been the most constant friend of this Countess; but for him and his father there might probably have been no question of a trial at this day. And yet he was allowed to beg for admittance, and to be shoved out of court because he had no friends. "The court is

a public court, and is open to the public," he said, as he thrust his shoulders forward with a resolution that he would effect an entrance. Then he was taken in hand by two constables and pushed back through the doorway,—to the great detriment of the apple-woman who sat there in those days.

But by pluck and resolution he succeeded in making good some inch of standing room within the court before the Solicitor-General began his statement, and he was able to hear every word that was said. That statement was not more pleasing to him than to the rector of Yoxham. His first quarrel was with the assertion that titles of nobility are in England the outward emblem of noble conduct. No words that might have been uttered could have been more directly antagonistic to his feelings and political creed. It had been the accident of his life that he should have been concerned with ladies who were noble by marriage and birth, and that it had become a duty to him to help to claim on their behalf empty names which were in themselves odious to him. It had been the woman's right to be acknowledged as the wife of the man who had disowned her, and the girl's right to be known as his legitimate daughter. Therefore had he been concerned. But he had declared to himself, from his first crude conception of an opinion on the subject,

that it would be hard to touch pitch and not be defiled. The lords of whom he heard were, or were believed by him to be, bloated with luxury, were both rich and idle, were gamblers, debauchers of other men's wives, deniers of all rights of citizenship, drones who were positively authorised to eat the honey collected by the working bees. With his half-knowledge, his ill-gotten and ill-digested information, with his reading which had all been on one side, he had been unable as yet to catch a glimpse of the fact that from the ranks of the nobility are taken the greater proportion of the hardworking servants of the State. His eyes saw merely the power, the privileges, the titles, the ribbons, and the money;—and he hated a lord. When therefore the Solicitor-General spoke of the recognised virtue of titles in England, the tailor uttered words of scorn to his stranger neighbour. “And yet this man calls himself a Liberal, and voted for the Reform Bill,” he said. “In course he did,” replied the stranger; “that was the way of his party.” “There isn't an honest man among them all,” said the tailor to himself. This was at the beginning of the speech, and he listened on through five long hours, not losing a word of the argument, not missing a single point made in favour of the Countess and her daughter. It became clear to him

at any rate that the daughter would inherit the money. When the Solicitor-General came to speak of the nature of the evidence collected in Italy, Daniel Thwaite was unconsciously carried away into a firm conviction that all those concerned in the matter in Italy were swindlers. The girl was no doubt the heiress. The feeling of all the court was with her,—as he could well perceive. But in all that speech not one single word was said of the friend who had been true to the girl and to her mother through all their struggles and adversity. The name of Thomas Thwaite was not once mentioned. It might have been expedient for them to ignore him, Daniel, the son; but surely had there been any honour among them, any feeling of common honesty towards folk so low in the scale of humanity as tailors, some word would have been spoken to tell of the friendship of the old man who had gone to his grave almost a pauper because of his truth and constancy. But no;—there was not a word!

And he listened, with anxious ears, to learn whether anything would be said as to that proposed "alliance,"—he had always heard it called an alliance with a grim smile,—between the two noble cousins. Heaven and earth had been moved to promote "the alliance." But the Solicitor-General

said not a word on the subject,—any more than he did of that other disreputable social arrangement, which would have been no more than a marriage. All the audience might suppose from anything that was said there that the young lady was fancy free and had never yet dreamed of a husband. Nevertheless there was hardly one there who had not heard something of the story of the Earl's suit,—and something also of the tailor's success.

When the court broke up Daniel Thwaite had reached standing-room, which brought him near to the seat that was occupied by Serjeant Bluestone. He lingered as long as he could, and saw all the barristers concerned standing with their heads together laughing, chatting, and well pleased, as though the day had been for them a day of pleasure. "I fancy the speculation is too bad for any one to take it up," he heard the Serjeant say, among whose various gifts was not that of being able to moderate his voice. "I dare say not," said Daniel to himself as he left the court; "and yet we took it up when the risk was greater, and when there was nothing to be gained." He had as yet received no explicit answer to the note which he had written to the Countess when he sent her the copy of his father's will. He had, indeed, received a notice from Mr. Goffe that the matter would receive immediate

attention, and that the Countess hoped to be able to settle the claim in a very short time. But that he thought was not such a letter as should have been sent to him on an occasion so full of interest to him ! But they were all hard and unjust and bad. The Countess was bad because she was a Countess,—the lawyers because they were lawyers,—the whole Lovel family because they were Lovels. At this moment poor Daniel Thwaite was very bitter against all mankind. He would, he thought, go at once to the Western world of which he was always dreaming, if he could only get that sum of £500 which was manifestly due to him.

But as he wandered away after the court was up, getting some wretched solitary meal at a cheap eating-house on his road, he endeavoured to fix his thoughts on the question of the girl's affection to himself. Taking all that had been said in that courtly lawyer's speech this morning as the groundwork of his present judgment, what should he judge to be her condition at the moment? He had heard on all sides that it was intended that she should marry the young Earl, and it had been said in his hearing that such would be declared before the judge. No such declaration had been made. Not a word had been uttered to signify that such an "alliance" was contemplated. Efforts had been

made with him to induce him to withdraw his claim to the girl's hand. The Countess had urged him, and the lawyers had urged him. Most assuredly they would not have done so,—would have in no wise troubled themselves with him at all,—had they been able to prevail with Lady Anna. And why had they not so prevailed? The girl, doubtless, had been subjected to every temptation. She was kept secure from his interference. Hitherto he had not even made an effort to see her since she had left the house in which he himself lived. She had nothing to fear from him. She had been sojourning among those Lovels, who would doubtless have made the way to deceit and luxury easy for her. He could not doubt but that she had been solicited to enter into this alliance. Could he be justified in flattering himself that she had hitherto resisted temptation because in her heart of hearts she was true to her first love? He was true. He was conscious of his own constancy. He was sure of himself that he was bound to her by his love, and not by the hope of any worldly advantage. And why should he think that she was weaker, vainer, less noble than himself? Had he not evidence to show him that she was strong enough to resist a temptation to which he had never been subjected? He had read of women who were above the guilt and

glitter of the world. When he was disposed to think that she would be false, no terms of reproach seemed to him too severe to heap upon her name; and yet, when he found that he had no ground on which to accuse her, even in his own thoughts, of treachery to himself, he could hardly bring himself to think it possible that she should not be treacherous. She had sworn to him, as he had sworn to her, and was he not bound to believe her oath?

Then he remembered what the poet had said to him. The poet had advised him to desist altogether, and had told him that it would certainly be best for the girl that he should do so. The poet had not based his advice on the ground that the girl would prove false, but that it would be good for the girl to be allowed to be false,—good for the girl that she should be encouraged to be false, in order that she might become an earl's wife! But he thought that it would be bad for any woman to be an earl's wife; and so thinking, how could he abandon his love in order that he might hand her over to a fashion of life which he himself despised? The poet must be wrong. He would cling to his love till he should know that his love was false to him. Should he ever learn that, then his love should be troubled with him no further.

But something must be done. Even, on her

behalf, if she were true to him, something must be done. Was it not pusillanimous in him to make no attempt to see his love and to tell her that he at any rate was true to her? These people, who were now his enemies, the lawyers and the Lovels, with the Countess at the head of them, had used him like a dog, had repudiated him without remorse, had not a word even to say of the services which his father had rendered. Was he bound by honour or duty to stand on any terms with them? Could there be anything due to them from him? Did it not behove him as a man to find his way into the girl's presence and to assist her with his courage? He did not fear them. What cause had he to fear them? In all that had been between them his actions to them had been kind and good, whereas they were treating him with the basest ingratitude.

But how should he see Lady Anna? As he thought of all this he wandered up from Westminster, where he had eaten his dinner, to Russell Square and into Keppel Street, hesitating whether he would at once knock at the door and ask to see Lady Anna Lovel. Lady Anna was still staying with Mrs. Bluestone; but Daniel Thwaite had not believed the Countess when she told him that her daughter was not living with her. He doubted, however, and did not knock at the door.

CHAPTER XXX.

JUSTICE IS TO BE DONE.

It must not be thought that the Countess was unmoved when she received Daniel Thwaite's letter from Keswick enclosing the copy of his father's will. She was all alone, and she sat long in her solitude, thinking of the friend who was gone and who had been always true to her. She herself would have done for old Thomas Thwaite any service which a woman could render to a man, so strongly did she feel all that the man had done for her. As she had once said, no menial office performed by her on behalf of the old tailor would have been degrading to her. She had eaten his bread, and she never for a moment forgot the obligation. The slow tears stood in her eyes as she thought of the long long hours which she had passed in his company, while, almost desponding herself, she had received courage from his persistency. And her feeling for the son would have been the same, had not the future position of

her daughter and the standing of the house of Lovel been at stake. It was not in her nature to be ungrateful; but neither was it in her nature to postpone the whole object of her existence to her gratitude. Even though she should appear to the world as a monster of ingratitude, she must treat the surviving Thwaite as her bitterest enemy as long as he maintained his pretensions to her daughter's hand. She could have no friendly communication with him. She herself would hold no communication with him at all, if she might possibly avoid it, lest she should be drawn into some renewed relation of friendship with him. He was her enemy, —her enemy in such fierce degree that she was always plotting the means of ridding herself altogether of his presence and influence. To her thinking the man had turned upon her most treacherously, and was using, for his own purposes and his own aggrandizement, that familiarity with her affairs which he had acquired by reason of his father's generosity. She believed but little in his love; but whether he loved the girl or merely sought her money, was all one to her. Her whole life had been passed in an effort to prove her daughter to be a lady of rank, and she would rather sacrifice her life in the basest manner than live to see all her efforts annulled by a low marriage.

Love, indeed, and romance! What was the love of one individual, what was the romance of a childish girl, to the honour and well-being of an ancient and noble family? It was her ambition to see her girl become the Countess Lovel, and no feeling of gratitude should stand in her way. She would rather slay that lowborn artisan with her own hand than know that he had the right to claim her as his mother-in-law. Nevertheless, the slow tears crept down her cheeks as she thought of former days, and of the little parlour behind the tailor's shop at Keswick, in which the two children had been wont to play.

But the money must be paid; or, at least, the debt must be acknowledged. As soon as she had somewhat recovered herself she opened the old desk which had for years been the receptacle of all her papers, and taking out sundry scribbled documents, went to work at a sum in addition. It cannot be said of her that she was a good accountant, but she had been so far careful as to have kept entries of all the monies she had received from Thomas Thwaite. She had once carried in her head a correct idea of the entire sum she owed him; but now she set down the items with dates, and made the account fair on a sheet of note paper. So much money she certainly did owe to Daniel Thwaite,

and so much she would certainly pay if ever the means of paying it should be hers. Then she went off with her account to Mr. Goffe.

Mr. Goffe did not think that the matter pressed. The payment of large sums which have been long due never is pressing in the eyes of lawyers. Men are always supposed to have a hundred pounds in their waistcoat pockets; but arrangements have to be made for the settling of thousands. "You had better let me write him a line and tell him that it shall be looked to as soon as the question as to the property is decided," said Mr. Goffe. But this did not suit the views of the Countess. She spoke out very openly as to all she owed to the father, and as to her eternal enmity to the son. It behoved her to pay the debt, if only that she might be able to treat the man altogether as an enemy. She had understood that, even pending the trial, a portion of the income would be allowed by the courts for her use and for the expenses of the trial. It was assented that this money should be paid. Could steps be taken by which it might be settled at once? Mr. Goffe, taking the memorandum, said that he would see what could be done, and then wrote his short note to Daniel Thwaite. When he had computed the interest which must undoubtedly be paid on the borrowed money he

found that a sum of about £9,000 was due to the tailor. "Nine thousand pounds!" said one Mr. Goffe to another. "That will be better to him than marrying the daughter of an earl." Could Daniel have heard the words he would have taken the lawyer by the throat and have endeavoured to teach him what love is.

Then the trial came on. Before the day fixed had come round, but only just before it, Mr. Goffe showed the account to Serjeant Bluestone. "God bless my soul!" said the Serjeant. "There should be some vouchers for such an amount as that. Mr. Goffe declared that there were no vouchers, except for a very trifling part of it; but still thought that the amount should be allowed. The Countess was quite willing to make oath, if need be, that the money had been supplied to her. Then the further consideration of the question was for the moment postponed, and the trial came on.

On the Tuesday, which had been left a vacant day as regarded the trial, there was a meeting,—like all other proceedings in this cause, very irregular in its nature,—at the chambers of the Solicitor-General, at which Serjeant Bluestone attended with Messrs. Hardy, Mainsail, Flick, and Goffe; and at this meeting, among other matters

of business, mention was made of the debt due by the Countess to Daniel Thwaite. Of this debt the Solicitor-General had not as yet heard,—though he had heard of the devoted friendship of the old tailor. That support had been afforded to some extent,—that for a period the shelter of old Thwaite's roof had been lent to the Countess,—that the man had been generous and trusting, he did know. He had learned, of course, that thence had sprung that early familiarity which had enabled the younger Thwaite to make his engagement with Lady Anna. That something should be paid when the ladies came by their own he was aware. But the ladies were not his clients, and into the circumstances he had not inquired. Now he was astounded and almost scandalized by the amount of the debt.

“Do you mean to say that he advanced £9,000 in hard cash?” said the Solicitor-General.

“That includes interest at five per cent., Sir William, and also a small sum for bills paid by Thomas Thwaite on her behalf. She has had in actual cash about £7,000.”

“And where has it gone?”

“A good deal of it through my hands,” said Mr. Goffe boldly. “During two or three years she had no income at all, and during the last twenty

years she has been at law for her rights. He advanced all the money when that trial for bigamy took place."

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Serjeant Bluestone."

"Did he leave a will?" asked the Solicitor-General.

"Oh, yes; a will which has been proved, and of which I have a copy. There was nothing else to leave but this debt, and that is left to the son."

"It should certainly be paid without delay," said Mr. Hardy. Mr. Mainsail questioned whether they could get the money. Mr. Goffe doubted whether it could be had before the whole affair was settled. Mr. Flick was sure that on due representation the amount would be advanced at once. The income of the property was already accumulating in the hands of the court, and there was an anxiety that all just demands,—demands which might be considered to be justly made on the family property,—should be paid without delay. "I think there would hardly be a question," said Mr. Hardy.

"Seven thousand pounds advanced by these two small tradesmen to the Countess Lovel," said the Solicitor-General, "and that done at a time when no relation of her own or of her husband would

lend her a penny! I wish I had known that when I went into court yesterday."

"It would hardly have done any good," said the Serjeant.

"It would have enabled one at any rate to give credit where credit is due. And this son is the man who claims to be affianced to the Lady Anna?"

"The same man, Sir William," said Mr. Goffe.

"One is almost inclined to think that he deserves her."

"I can't agree with you there at all," said the Serjeant angrily.

"One at any rate is not astonished that the young lady should think so," continued the Solicitor-General. "Upon my word, I don't know how we are to expect that she should throw her early lover overboard after such evidence of devotion."

"The marriage would be too incongruous," said Mr. Hardy.

"Quite horrible," said the Serjeant.

"It distresses one to think of it," said Mr. Goffe.

"It would be much better that she should not be Lady Anna at all, if she is to do that," said Mr. Mainsail.

"Very much better," said Mr. Flick, shaking his head, and remembering that he was employed by Lord Lovel and not by the Countess,—a fact

of which it seemed to him that the Solicitor-General altogether forgot the importance.

“Gentlemen, you have no romance among you,” said Sir William. Have not generosity and valour always prevailed over wealth and rank with ladies in story?”

“I do not remember any valorous tailors who have succeeded with ladies of high degree,” said Mr. Hardy.

“Did not the lady of the Strachy marry the yeoman of the wardrobe?” asked the Solicitor-General.

“I don’t know that we care much about romance here,” said the Serjeant. “The marriage would be so abominable, that it is not to be thought of.”

“The tailor should at any rate get his money,” said the Solicitor-General, “and I will undertake to say that if the case be as represented by Mr. Goffe——

“It certainly is,” said the attorney.

“Then there will be no difficulty in raising the funds for paying it. If he is not to have his wife, at any rate let him have his money. I think, Mr. Flick, that intimation should be made to him that Earl Lovel will join the Countess in immediate application to the court for means to settle his claim. Circumstanced as we are at present, there

can be no doubt that such application will have the desired result. It should, of course, be intimated that Serjeant Bluestone and myself are both of opinion that the money should be allowed for the purpose."

As the immediate result of this conversation, Daniel Thwaite received on the following morning letters both from Mr. Goffe and Mr. Flick. The former intimated to him that a sum of nine thousand odd pounds was held to be due to him by the Countess, and that immediate steps would be taken for its payment. That from Mr. Flick, which was much shorter than the letter from his brother attorney, merely stated that as a very large sum of money appeared to be due by the Countess Lovel to the estate of the late Thomas Thwaite, for sums advanced to the Countess during the last twenty years, the present Earl Lovel had been advised to join the Countess in application to the courts, that the amount due might be paid out of the income of the property left by the late Earl; and that that application would be made "*immediately.*" Mr. Goffe in his letter, went on to make certain suggestions, and to give much advice. As this very large debt, of which no proof was extant, was freely admitted by the Countess, and as steps were being at once taken to ensure payment of

the whole sum named to Daniel Thwaite, as his father's heir, it was hoped that Daniel Thwaite would at once abandon his preposterous claim to the hand of Lady Anna Lovel. Then Mr. Goffe put forward in glowing colours the iniquity of which Daniel Thwaite would be guilty should he continue his fruitless endeavours to postpone the re-establishment of a noble family which was thus showing its united benevolence by paying to him the money which it owed him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VERDICT.

ON the Wednesday the court reassembled in all its judicial glory. There was the same crowd, the same Lord Chief Justice, the same jury, and the same array of friendly lawyers. There had been a rumour that a third retinue of lawyers would appear on behalf of what was now generally called the Italian interest, and certain words which had fallen from the Solicitor-General on Monday had assured the world at large that the Italian interest would be represented. It was known that the Italian case had been confided to a firm of enterprising solicitors, named Mowbray and Mopus, perhaps more feared than respected, which was supposed to do a great amount of speculative business. But no one from the house of Messrs. Mowbray and Mopus was in court on the Wednesday morning; and no energetic barrister was ever enriched by a fee from them on behalf of the Italian widow. The

speculation had been found to be too deep, the expenditure which would be required in advance too great, and the prospect of remuneration too remote even for Mowbray and Mopus. It appeared afterwards that application had been made by those gentlemen for an assurance that expenses incurred on behalf of the Italian Countess should be paid out of the estate; but this had been refused. No guarantee to this effect could be given, at any rate till it should be seen whether the Italian lady had any show of justice on her side. It was now the general belief that if there was any truth at all in the Italian claim, it rested on the survivorship, at the time of the Cumberland marriage, of a wife who had long since died. As the proof of this would have given no penny to any one in Italy,—would simply have shown that the Earl was the heir,—Messrs. Mowbray and Mopus retired, and there was an end, for ever and a day, of the Italian interest.

Though there was the same throng in the court as on the Monday, there did not seem to be the same hubbub on the opening of the day's proceedings. The barristers were less busy with their papers, the attorneys sat quite at their ease, and the Chief Justice, with an assistant judge, who was his bench-fellow, appeared for some minutes to be quite

passive. Then the Solicitor-General arose and said that, with permission, he would occupy the court for only a few minutes. He had stated on Monday his belief that an application would be made to the court on behalf of other interests than those which had been represented when the court first met. It appeared that he had been wrong in that surmise. Of course he had no knowledge on the subject, but it did not appear that any learned gentleman was prepared to address the court for any third party. As he, on behalf of his client, had receded from the case, his Lordship would probably say what, in his Lordship's opinion, should now be the proceeding of the court. The Earl Lovel abandoned his plea, and perhaps the court would, in those circumstances, decide that its jurisdiction in the matter was over. Then the Lord Chief Justice, with his assistant judge, retired for a while, and all the assembled crowd appeared to be at liberty to discuss the matter just as everybody pleased.

It was undoubtedly the opinion of the bar at large, and at that moment of the world in general, that the Solicitor-General had done badly for his client. The sum of money which was at stake was, they said, too large to be played with. As the advocate of the Earl, Sir William ought to have kept himself aloof from the Countess and her

daughter. In lieu of regarding his client, he had taken upon himself to set things right in general, according to his idea of right. No doubt he was a clever man, and knew how to address a jury, but he was always thinking of himself, and bolstering up something of his own, instead of thinking of his case and bolstering up his client. And this conception of his character in general, and of his practice in this particular, became the stronger, as it was gradually believed that the living Italian Countess was certainly an impostor. There would have been little good in fighting against the English Countess on her behalf;—but if they could only have proved that the other Italian woman, who was now dead, had been the real Countess when the Cumberland marriage was made, then what a grand thing it would have been for the Lovel family! Of those who held this opinion, the rector of Yoxham was the strongest, and the most envenomed against the Solicitor-General. During the whole of that Tuesday he went about declaring that the interests of the Lovel family had been sacrificed by their own counsel, and late in the afternoon he managed to get hold of Mr. Hardy. Could nothing be done? Mr. Hardy was of opinion that nothing could be done now; but in the course of the evening he did, at the rector's

instance, manage to see Sir William, and to ask the question, "Could nothing be done?"

"Nothing more than we propose to do."

"Then the case is over," said Mr. Hardy. "I am assured that no one will stir on behalf of that Italian lady."

"If any one did stir it would only be loss of time and money. My dear Hardy, I understand as well as any one what people are saying, and I know what must be the feeling of many of the Lovels. But I can only do my duty by my client to the best of my judgment. In the first place, you must remember that he has himself acknowledged the Countess."

"By our advice," said Mr. Hardy.

"You mean by mine. Exactly so;—but with such conviction on his own part that he positively refuses to be a party to any suit which shall be based on the assumption that she is not Countess Lovel. Let an advocate be ever so obdurate, he can hardly carry on a case in opposition to his client's instructions. We are acting for Lord Lovel, and not for the Lovel family. And I feel assured of this, that were we to attempt to set up the plea that that other woman was alive when the marriage took place in Cumberland, you, yourself, would be ashamed of the evidence which it would become your duty to endeavour to foist upon the jury. We

should certainly be beaten, and, in the ultimate settlement of the property, we should have to do with enemies instead of friends. The man was tried for bigamy and acquitted. Would any jury get over that unless you had evidence to offer to them that was plain as a pikestaff, and absolutely incontrovertible?"

"Do you still think the girl will marry the Earl?"

"No; I do not. She seems to have a will of her own, and that will is bent the other way. But I do think that a settlement may be made of the property which shall be very much in the Earl's favour." When on the following morning the Solicitor-General made his second speech, which did not occupy above a quarter of an hour, it became manifest that he did not intend to alter his course of proceeding, and while the judges were absent it was said by everybody in the court that the Countess and Lady Anna had gained their suit.

"I consider it to be a most disgraceful course of proceeding on the part of Sir William Patterson," said the rector to a middle-aged legal functionary, who was managing clerk to Norton and Flick.

"We all think, sir, that there was more fight in it," said the legal functionary.

"There was plenty of fight in it. I don't believe that any jury in England would willingly have

taken such an amount of property from the head of the Lovel family. For the last twenty years,—ever since I first heard of the pretended English marriage,—everybody has known that she was no more a Countess than I am. I can't understand it; upon my word I can't. I have not had much to do with law, but I've always been brought up to think that an English barrister would be true to his client. I believe a case can be tried again if it can be shown that the lawyers have mismanaged it." The unfortunate rector, when he made this suggestion, no doubt forgot that the client in this case was in full agreement with the wicked advocate.

The judges were absent for about half an hour, and on their return the Chief Justice declared that his learned brother,—the Serjeant namely,—had better proceed with the case on behalf of his clients. He went on to explain that as the right to the property in dispute, and indeed the immediate possession of that property, would be ruled by the decision of the jury, it was imperative that they should hear what the learned counsel for the so-called Countess and her daughter had to say, and what evidence they had to offer, as to the validity of her marriage. It was not to be supposed that he intended to throw any doubt on that marriage, but such would be the safer course. No doubt, in the

ordinary course of succession, a widow and a daughter would inherit and divide among them in certain fixed proportions the personal property of a deceased but intestate husband and father, without the intervention of any jury to declare their rights. But in this case suspicion had been thrown and adverse statements had been made; and as his learned brother was, as a matter of course, provided with evidence to prove that which the plaintiff had come into the court with the professed intention of disproving, the case had better go on. Then he wrapped his robes around him and threw himself back in the attitude of a listener. Serjeant Bluestone, already on his legs, declared himself prepared and willing to proceed. No doubt the course as now directed was the proper course to be pursued. The Solicitor-General, rising gracefully and bowing to the court, gave his consent with complaisant patronage. "Your Lordship, no doubt, is right." His words were whispered, and very probably not heard; but the smile, as coming from a Solicitor-General,—from such a Solicitor-General as Sir William Patterson,—was sufficient to put any judge at his ease.

Then Serjeant Bluestone made his statement, and the case was proceeded with after the fashion of such trials. It will not concern us to follow the

further proceedings of the court with any close attention. The Solicitor-General went away, to some other business, and much of the interest seemed to drop. The marriage in Cumberland was proved; the trial for bigamy, with the acquittal of the Earl, was proved; the two opposed statements of the Earl, as to the death of the first wife, and afterwards as to the fact that she was living, were proved. Serjeant Bluestone and Mr. Mainsail were very busy for two days, having everything before them. Mr. Hardy, on behalf of the young lord, kept his seat, but he said not a word—not even asking a question of one of Serjeant Bluestone's witnesses. Twice the foreman of the jury interposed, expressing an opinion, on behalf of himself and his brethren, that the case need not be proceeded with further; but the judge ruled that it was for the interest of the Countess,—he ceased to style her the so-called Countess,—that her advocates should be allowed to complete their case. In the afternoon of the second day they did complete it, with great triumph and a fine flourish of forensic oratory as to the cruel persecution which their client had endured. The Solicitor-General came back into court in time to hear the judge's charge, which was very short. The jury were told that they had no alternative but to find a verdict for the defendants.

It was explained to them that this was a plea to show that a certain marriage which had taken place in Cumberland in 181—, was no real or valid marriage. Not only was that plea withdrawn, but evidence had been adduced proving that that marriage was valid. Such a marriage was, as a matter of course, *primâ facie* valid, let what statements might be made to the contrary by those concerned or not concerned. In such case the burden of proof would rest entirely with the makers of such statement. No such proof had been here attempted, and the marriage must be declared a valid marriage. The jury had nothing to do with the disposition of the property, and it would be sufficient for them simply to find a verdict for the defendants. The jury did as they were bid; but, going somewhat beyond this, declared that they found the two defendants to be properly named the Countess Lovel, and Lady Anna Lovel. So ended the case of "Lovel v. Murray and Another."

The Countess, who had been in the court all day, was taken home to Keppel Street by the Serjeant in a glass coach that had been hired to be in waiting for her. "And now, Lady Lovel," said Serjeant Bluestone, as he took his seat opposite to her, "I can congratulate your ladyship on the full restitution of your rights." She only shook her head.

“The battle has been fought and won at last, and I will make free to say that I have never seen more admirable persistency than you have shown since first that bad man astounded your ears by his iniquity.”

“It has been all to no purpose,” she said.

“To no purpose, Lady Lovel! I may as well tell you now that it is expected that his Majesty will send to congratulate you on the restitution of your rights.”

Again she shook her head. “Ah, Serjeant Blue-stone;—that will be but of little service.”

“No further objection can now be made to the surrender of the whole property. There are some mining shares as to which there may be a question whether they are real or personal, but they amount to but little. A third of the remainder, which will, I imagine, exceed——”

“If it were ten times as much, Serjeant Blue-stone, there would be no comfort in it. If it were ten times that, it would not at all help to heal my sorrow. I have sometimes thought that when one is marked for trouble, no ease can come.”

“I don’t think more of money than another man,” began the Serjeant.

“You do not understand.”

“Nor yet of titles,—though I feel for them,

when they are worthily worn, the highest respect," as he so spoke the Serjeant lifted his hat from his brow. "But, upon my word, to have won such a case as this justifies triumph."

"I have won nothing,—nothing,—nothing!"

"You mean about Lady Anna?"

"Serjeant Bluestone, when first I was told that I was not that man's wife, I swore to myself that I would die sooner than accept any lower name; but when I found that I was a mother, then I swore that I would live till my child should bear the name that of right belonged to her."

"She does bear it now."

"What name does she propose to bear? I would sooner be poor, in beggary,—still fighting, even without means to fight, for an empty title,—still suffering, still conscious that all around me regarded me as an impostor, than conquer only to know that she, for whom all this has been done, has degraded her name and my own. If she does this thing, or, if she has a mind so low, a spirit so mean, as to think of doing it, would it not be better for all the world that she should be the bastard child of a rich man's kept mistress, than the acknowledged daughter of an earl, with a countess for her mother, and a princely fortune to support her rank? If she marries this man, I shall heartily wish that

Lord Lovel had won the case. I care nothing for myself now. I have lost all that. The king's message will comfort me not at all. If she do this thing I shall only feel the evil we have done in taking the money from the Earl. I would sooner see her dead at my feet than know that she was that man's wife;—ay, though I had stabbed her with my own hand!”

The Serjeant for the nonce could say nothing more to her. She had worked herself into such a passion that she would listen to no words but her own, and think of nothing but the wrong that was still being done to her. He put her down at the hall door in Keppel Street, saying, as he lifted his hat again, that Mrs. Bluestone should come and call upon her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WILL YOU PROMISE?

THE news of the verdict was communicated the same evening to Lady Anna,—as to whose name there could now no longer be any dispute. “I congratulate you, Lady Anna,” said the Serjeant, holding her hand, “that everything as far as this trial is concerned has gone just as we could wish.”

“We owe it all to you,” said the girl.

“Not at all. My work has been very easy. In fact I have some feeling of regret that I have not been placed in a position that would enable me to earn my wages. The case was too good,—so that a poor aspiring lawyer has not been able to add to his reputation. But as far as you are concerned, my dear, everything has gone as you should wish. You are now a very wealthy heiress, and the great duty devolves upon you of disposing of your wealth in a fitting manner.” Lady Anna understood well what was meant, and was silent. Even when she

was alone, her success did not make her triumphant. She could anticipate that the efforts of all her friends to make her false to her word would be redoubled. Unless she could see Daniel Thwaite, it would be impossible that she should not be conquered.

The Serjeant told his wife the promise which he had made on her behalf, and she, of course, undertook to go to Keppel Street on the following morning. "You had better bring her here," said the Serjeant. Mrs. Bluestone remarked that that might be sooner said than done. "She'll be glad of an excuse to come," answered the Serjeant. "On such an occasion as this, of course they must see each other. Something must be arranged about the property. In a month or two, when she is of age, she will have the undisputed right to do what she pleases with about three hundred thousand pounds. It is a most remarkable position for a young girl who has never yet had the command of a penny, and who professes that she is engaged to marry a working tailor. Of course her mother must see her."

Mrs. Bluestone did call in Keppel Street, and sat with the Countess a long time, undergoing a perfect hailstorm of passion. For a long time Lady Lovel declared that she would never see her

daughter again till the girl had given a solemn promise that she would not marry Daniel Thwaite. "Love her! Of course I love her. She is all that I have in the world. But of what good is my love to me, if she disgraces me? She has disgraced me already. When she could bring herself to tell her cousin that she was engaged to this man, we were already disgraced. When she once allowed the man to speak to her in that strain, without withering him with her scorn, she disgraced us both. For what have I done it all, if this is to be the end of it?" But at last she assented and promised that she would come. No;—it would not be necessary to send a carriage for her. The habits of her own life need not be at all altered because she was now a Countess beyond dispute, and also wealthy. She would be content to live as she had ever lived. It had gone on too long for her to desire personal comfort,—luxury for herself, or even social rank. The only pleasure that she had anticipated, the only triumph that she desired, was to be found in the splendour of her child. She would walk to Bedford Square, and then walk back to her lodgings in Keppel Street. She wanted no carriage.

Early on the following day there was heard the knock at the door which Lady Anna had been

taught to expect. The coming visit had been discussed in all its bearings, and it had been settled that Mrs. Bluestone should be with the daughter when the mother arrived. It was thought that in this way the first severity of the Countess would be mitigated, and that the chance of some agreement between them might be increased. Both the Serjeant and Mrs. Bluestone now conceived that the young lady had a stronger will of her own than might have been expected from her looks, her language, and her manners. She had not as yet yielded an inch, though she would not argue the matter at all when she was told that it was her positive duty to abandon the tailor. She would sit quite silent; and if silence does give consent, she consented to this doctrine. Mrs. Bluestone, with a diligence which was equalled only by her good humour, insisted on the misery which must come upon her young friend should she quarrel with the Countess, and with all the Lovels,—on the unfitness of the tailor, and the impossibility that such a marriage should make a lady happy,—on the sacred duty which Lady Anna's rank imposed upon her to support her order, and on the general blessedness of a well-preserved and exclusive aristocracy. "I don't mean to say that nobly born people are a bit better than commoners," said Mrs. Bluestone.

“Neither I nor my children have a drop of noble blood in our veins. It is not that. But God Almighty has chosen that there should be different ranks to carry out His purposes, and we have His word to tell us that we should all do our duties in that state of life to which it has pleased Him to call us.” The excellent lady was somewhat among the clouds in her theology, and apt to mingle the different sources of religious instruction from which she was wont to draw lessons for her own and her children’s guidance ; but she meant to say that the proper state of life for an earl’s daughter could not include an attachment to a tailor ; and Lady Anna took it as it was meant. The nobly born young lady did not in heart deny the truth of the lesson ;—but she had learned another lesson, and she did not know how to make the two compatible. That other lesson taught her to believe that she ought to be true to her word ;—that she specially ought to be true to one who had ever been specially true to her. And latterly there had grown upon her a feeling less favourable to the Earl than that which he had inspired when she first saw him, and which he had increased when they were together at Yoxham. It is hard to say why the Earl had ceased to charm her, or by what acts or words he had lowered himself in her eyes. He was as handsome as ever,

as much like a young Apollo, as gracious in his manner, and as gentle in his gait. And he had been constant to her. Perhaps it was that she had expected that one so godlike should have ceased to adore a woman who had degraded herself to the level of a tailor, and that, so conceiving, she had begun to think that his motives might be merely human, and perhaps sordid. He ought to have abstained and seen her no more after she had owned her own degradation. But she said nothing of all this to Mrs. Bluestone. She made no answer to the sermons preached to her. She certainly said no word tending to make that lady think that the sermons had been of any avail. "She looks as soft as butter," Mrs. Bluestone said that morning to her husband; "but she is obstinate as a pig all the time."

"I suppose her father was the same way before her," said the Serjeant, "and God knows her mother is obstinate enough."

When the Countess was shown into the room Lady Anna was trembling with fear and emotion. Lady Lovel, during the last few weeks, since her daughter had seen her, had changed the nature of her dress. Hitherto, for years past, she had worn a brown stuff gown, hardly ever varying even the shade of the sombre colour,—so that her daughter

had perhaps never seen her otherwise clad. No woman that ever breathed was less subject to personal vanity than had been the so-called Countess who lived in the little cottage outside Keswick. Her own dress had been as nothing to her, and in the days of her close familiarity with old Thomas Thwaite she had rebuked her friend when he had besought her to attire herself in silk. "We'll go into Keswick and get Anna a new ribbon," she would say, "and that will be grandeur enough for her and me too." In this brown dress she had come up to London, and so she had been clothed when her daughter last saw her. But now she wore a new, full, black silk dress, which, plain as it was, befitted her rank and gave an increased authority to her commanding figure. Lady Anna trembled all the more, and her heart sank still lower within her, because her mother no longer wore the old brown gown. When the Countess entered the room she took no immediate notice of Mrs. Bluestone, but went up to her child and kissed her. "I am comforted, Anna, in seeing you once again," she said.

"Dear, dearest mamma!"

"You have heard, I suppose, that the trial has been decided in your favour?"

"In yours, mamma."

“ We have explained it all to her, Lady Lovel, as well as we could. The Serjeant yesterday evening gave us a little history of what occurred. It seems to have been quite a triumph.”

“ It may become a triumph,” said the Countess;—
“ a triumph so complete and glorious that I shall desire nothing further in this world. It has been my work to win the prize; it is for her to wear it,— if she will do so.”

“ I hope you will both live to enjoy it many years,” said Mrs. Bluestone. “ You will have much to say to each other, and I will leave you now. We shall have lunch, Lady Lovel, at half-past one, and I hope that you will join us.”

Then they were alone together. Lady Anna had not moved from her chair since she had embraced her mother, but the Countess had stood during the whole time that Mrs. Bluestone had been in the room. When the room door was closed they both remained silent for a few moments, and then the girl rushed across the room and threw herself on her knees at her mother’s feet. “ Oh, mamma, mamma, tell me that you love me. Oh, mamma, why have you not let me come to you? Oh, mamma, we never were parted before.”

“ My child never before was wilfully disobedient to me.”

“ Oh, mamma ;—tell me that you love me.”

“ Love you ! Yes, I love you. You do not doubt that, Anna. How could it be possible that you should doubt it after twenty years of a mother’s care ? You know I love you.”

“ I know that I love you, mamma, and that it kills me to be sent away from you. You will take me home with you now ;—will you not ? ”

“ Home ! You shall make your own home, and I will take you whither you will. I will be a servant to minister to every whim ; all the world shall be a Paradise to you ; you shall have every joy that wealth, and love, and sweet friends can procure for you,—if you will obey me in one thing.” Lady Anna, still crouching upon the ground, hid her face in her mother’s dress, but she was silent. “ It is not much that I ask after a life spent in winning for you all that has now been won. I only demand of you that you shall not disgrace yourself.”

“ Oh, mamma, I am not disgraced.”

“ Say that you will marry Lord Lovel, and all that shall be forgotten. It shall at any rate be forgiven, or remembered only as the folly of a child. Will you say that you will become Lord Lovel’s wife ? ”

“ Oh, mamma ! ”

“ Answer me, Anna ;—will you say that you will receive Lord Lovel as your accepted lover? Get up, girl, and look me in the face. Of what use is it to grovel there, while your spirit is in rebellion? Will you do this? Will you save us all from destruction, misery, and disgrace? Will you remember who you are;—what blood you have in your veins;—what name it is that you bear? Stand up, and look me in the face, if you dare.”

Lady Anna did stand up, and did look her mother in the face. “ Mamma,” she said, “ we should understand each other better if we were living together as we ought to do.”

“ I will never live with you till you have promised obedience. Will you, at any rate, pledge to me your word that you will never become the wife of Daniel Thwaite?” Then she paused, and stood looking at the girl, perhaps for a minute. Lady Anna stood before her, with her eyes turned upon the ground. “ Answer me the question that I have asked you. Will you promise me that you will never become the wife of Daniel Thwaite?”

“ I have promised him that I would.”

“ What is that to me? Is your duty to him higher than your duty to me? Can you be bound by any promise to so great a crime as that would

be? I will ask you the question once more, and I will be governed by your answer. If you will promise to discard this man, you shall return home with me, and shall then choose everything for yourself. We will go abroad and travel if you wish it, and all things shall be prepared to give you pleasure. You shall have at once the full enjoyment of all that has been won for you; and as for your cousin,—you shall not for a while be troubled even by his name. It is the dear wish of my heart that you should be the wife of Earl Lovel;—but I have one wish dearer even than that,—one to which that shall be altogether postponed. If you will save yourself, and me, and all your family from the terrible disgrace with which you have threatened us,—I will not again mention your cousin's name to you till it shall please you to hear it. Anna, you knelt to me, just now. Shall I kneel to you?"

"No, mamma, no;—I should die."

"Then, my love, give me the promise that I have asked."

"Mamma, he has been so good to us!"

"And we will be good to him,—good to him in his degree. Of what avail to me will have been his goodness, if he is to rob me of the very treasure which his goodness helped to save? Is he to have all, because he gave some aid? Is he to take from

me my heart's blood, because he bound up my arm when it was bruised? Because he helped me some steps on earth, is he to imprison me afterwards in hell? Good! No, he is not good in wishing so to destroy us. He is bad, greedy, covetous, self-seeking, a very dog, and by the living God he shall die like a dog unless you will free me from his fangs. You have not answered me. Will you tell me that you will discard him as a suitor for your hand? If you will say so, he shall receive tenfold reward for his——goodness. Answer me, Anna;—I claim an answer from you.”

“Mamma!”

“Speak, if you have anything to say. And remember the commandment, Honour thy——” But she broke down, when she too remembered it, and bore in mind that the precept would have called upon her daughter to honour the memory of the deceased Earl. “But if you cannot do it for love, you will never do it for duty.”

“Mamma, I am sure of one thing.”

“Of what are you sure?”

“That I ought to be allowed to see him before I give him up.”

“You shall never be allowed to see him.”

“Listen to me, mamma, for a moment. When he asked me to——love him, we were equals.”

“ I deny it. You were never equals.”

“ We lived as such,—except in this, that they had money for our wants, and we had none to repay them.”

“ Money can have nothing to do with it.”

“ Only that we took it. And then he was everything to us. It seemed as though it would be impossible to refuse anything that he asked. It was impossible to me. As to being noble, I am sure that he was noble. You always used to say that nobody else ever was so good as those two. Did you not say so, mamma ?”

“ If I praise my horse or my dog, do I say that they are of the same nature as myself ?”

“ But he is a man ; quite as much a man as,—— as any man could be.”

“ You mean that you will not do as I bid you.”

“ Let me see him, mamma. Let me see him but once. If I might see him, perhaps I might do as you wish——about him. I cannot say anything more unless I may see him.”

The Countess still stormed and still threatened, but she could not move her daughter. She also found that the child had inherited particles of the nature of her parents. But it was necessary that some arrangement should be made as to the future life, both of Lady Anna and of herself. She might

bury herself where she would, in the most desolate corner of the earth, but she could not leave Lady Anna in Bedford Square. In a few months Lady Anna might choose any residence she pleased for herself, and there could be no doubt whose house she would share, if she were not still kept in subjection. The two parted then in deep grief,—the mother almost cursing her child in her anger, and Lady Anna overwhelmed with tears. “Will you not kiss me, mamma, before you go?”

“No, I will never kiss you again till you have shown me that you are my child.”

But before she left the house, the Countess was closeted for a while with Mrs. Bluestone, and, in spite of all that she had said, it was agreed between them that it would be better to permit an interview between the girl and Daniel Thwaite. “Let him say what he will,” argued Mrs. Bluestone, “she will not be more headstrong than she is now. You will still be able to take her away with you to some foreign country.”

“But he will treat her as though he were her lover,” said the Countess, unable to conceal the infinite disgust with which the idea overwhelmed her.

“What does it matter, Lady Lovel? We have got to get a promise from her, somehow. Since she

was much with him, she has seen people of another sort, and she will feel the difference. It may be that she wants to ask him to release her. At any rate she speaks as though she might be released by what he would say to her. Unless she thought it might be so herself, she would not make a conditional promise. I would let them meet."

"But where?"

"In Keppel Street."

"In my presence?"

"No, not that; but you will, of course, be in the house,—so that she cannot leave it with him. Let her come to you. It will be an excuse for her doing so, and then she can remain. If she does not give the promise, take her abroad, and teach her to forget it by degrees." So it was arranged, and on that evening Mrs. Bluestone told Lady Anna that she was to be allowed to meet Daniel Thwaite.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DANIEL THWAITE RECEIVES HIS MONEY.

THERE was of course much commotion among all circles of society in London as soon as it was known to have been decided that the Countess Lovel was the Countess Lovel, and that Lady Anna was the heiress of the late Earl. Bets were paid,—and bets no doubt were left unpaid,—to a great amount. Men at the clubs talked more about the Lovels than they had done even during the month preceding the trial. The Countess became on a sudden very popular. Exaggerated stories were told of the romance of her past life,—though it would have been well nigh impossible to exaggerate her sufferings. Her patience, her long endurance and persistency were extolled by all. The wealth that would accrue to her and to her daughter was of course doubled. Had anybody seen her? Did anybody know her? Even the Murrays began to be proud of her, and old Lady Jemima Magtaggart, who had been a

Murray before she married General Mag, as he was called, went at once and called upon the Countess in Keppel Street. Being the first that did so, before the Countess had suspected any invasion, she was admitted,—and came away declaring that sorrow must have driven the Countess mad. The Countess, no doubt, did not receive her distant relative with any gentle courtesy. She had sworn to herself often, that come what come might, she would never cross the threshold of a Murray. Old Lord Swanage, who had married some very distant Lovel, wrote to her a letter full of very proper feeling. It had been, he said, quite impossible for him to know the truth before the truth had come to light, and therefore he made no apology for not having before this made overtures of friendship to his connection. He now begged to express his great delight that she who had so well deserved success had been successful, and to offer her his hand in friendship, should she be inclined to accept it. The Countess answered him in a strain which certainly showed that she was not mad. It was not her policy to quarrel with any Lovel, and her letter was very courteous. She was greatly obliged to him for his kindness, and had felt as strongly as he could do that she could have no claim on her husband's relations till she should succeed in establishing her

rights. She accepted his hand in the spirit in which it had been offered, and hoped that his Lordship might yet become a friend of her daughter. For herself,—she feared that all that she had suffered had made her unfit for much social intercourse. Her strength, she said, had been sufficient to carry her thus far, but was now failing her.

Then, too, there came to her that great glory of which the lawyer had given her a hint. She received a letter from the private secretary of his Majesty the King, telling her that his Majesty had heard her story with great interest, and now congratulated her heartily on the re-establishment of her rank and position. She wrote a very curt note, begging that her thanks might be given to his Majesty,—and then she burned the private secretary's letter. No congratulations were anything to her till she should see her daughter freed from the debasement of her engagement to the tailor.

Speculation was rife as to the kind of life which the Countess would lead. That she would have wealth sufficient to blaze forth in London with all the glories of Countess-ship, there was no doubt. Her own share of the estate was put down as worth at least ten thousand a year for her life, and this she would enjoy without deductions, and with no other expenditure than that needed for herself.

Her age was ascertained to a day, and it was known that she was as yet only forty-five. Was it not probable that some happy man might share her wealth with her? What an excellent thing it would be for old Lundy,—the Marquis of Lundy,—who had run through every shilling of his own property! Before a week was over, the suggestion had been made to old Lundy. “They say she is mad, but she can’t be mad enough for that,” said the Marquis.

The rector hurried home full of indignation, but he had a word or two with his nephew before he started. “What do you mean to do now, Frederic?” asked the rector with a very grave demeanour.

“Do? I don’t know that I shall do anything.”

“You give up the girl, then?”

“My dear uncle; that is a sort of question that I don’t think a man ever likes to be asked.”

“But I suppose I may ask how you intend to live?”

“I trust, uncle Charles, that I shall not, at any rate, be a burden to my relatives.”

“Oh; very well; very well. Of course I have nothing more to say. I think it right, all the same, to express my opinion that you have been grossly misused by Sir William Patterson. Of course what I say will have no weight with you; but that is my opinion.”

"I do not agree with you, uncle Charles."

"Very well; I have nothing more to say. It is right that I should let you know that I do not believe that this woman was ever Lord Lovel's wife. I never did believe it, and I never will believe it. All that about marrying the girl has been a take in from beginning to end;—all planned to induce you to do just what you have done. No word in courtesy should ever have been spoken to either of them."

"I am as sure that she is the Countess as I am that I am the Earl."

"Very well. It costs me nothing, but it costs you thirty thousand a year. Do you mean to come down to Yoxham this winter?"

"No."

"Are the horses to be kept there?" Now hitherto the rich rector had kept the poor lord's hunters without charging his nephew ought for their expense. He was a man so constituted that it would have been a misery to him that the head of his family should not have horses to ride. But now he could not but remember all that he had done, all that he was doing, and the return that was made to him. Nevertheless he could have bit the tongue out of his mouth for asking the question as soon as the words were spoken.

"I will have them sold immediately," said the Earl. "They shall come up to Tattersal's before the week is over."

"I didn't mean that."

"I am glad that you thought of it, uncle Charles. They shall be taken away at once."

"They are quite welcome to remain at Yoxham."

"They shall be removed,—and sold," said the Earl. "Remember me to my aunts. Good bye." Then the rector went down to Yoxham an angry and a miserable man.

There were very many who still agreed with the rector in thinking that the Earl's case had been mismanaged. There was surely enough of ground for a prolonged fight to have enabled the Lovel party to have driven their opponents to a compromise. There was a feeling that the Solicitor-General had been carried away by some romantic idea of abstract right, and had acted in direct opposition to all the usages of forensic advocacy as established in England. What was it to him whether the Countess were or were not a real Countess? It had been his duty to get what he could for the Earl, his client. There had been much to get, and with patience no doubt something might have been got. But he had gotten nothing. Many thought that he had altogether cut his own

throat, and that he would have to take the first "puny" judgeship vacant. "He is a great man, —a very great man indeed," said the Attorney-General, in answer to some one who was abusing Sir William. "There is not one of us can hold a candle to him. But, then, as I have always said, he ought to have been a poet!"

In discussing the Solicitor-General's conduct men thought more of Lady Anna than her mother. The truth about Lady Anna and her engagement was generally known in a misty, hazy, half-truthful manner. That she was engaged to marry Daniel Thwaite, who was now becoming famous and the cause of a greatly increased business in Wigmore Street, was certain. It was certain also that the Earl had desired to marry her. But as to the condition in which the matter stood at present there was a very divided opinion. Not a few were positive that a written engagement had been given to the Earl that he should have the heiress before the Solicitor-General had made his speech,—but, according to these, the tailor's hold over the young lady was so strong, that she now refused to abide by her own compact. She was in the tailor's hands and the tailor could do what he liked with her. It was known that Lady Anna was in Bedford Square, and not a few walked before the Serjeant's

house in the hopes of seeing her. The romance at any rate was not over, and possibly there might even yet be a compromise. If the Earl could get even five thousand a year out of the property, it was thought that the Solicitor-General might hold his own and in due time become at any rate a Chief Baron.

In the mean time Daniel Thwaite remained in moody silence among the workmen in Wigmore Street, unseen of any of those who rushed there for new liveries in order that they might catch a glimpse of the successful hero,—till one morning, about five days after the trial was over, when he received a letter from Messrs. Goffe and Goffe. Messrs. Goffe and Goffe had the pleasure of informing him that an accurate account of all money transactions between Countess Lovel and his father had been kept by the Countess;—that the Countess on behalf of herself and Lady Anna Lovel acknowledged a debt due to the estate of the late Mr. Thomas Thwaite, amounting to £9,109 3s. 4*d.*, and that a cheque to that amount should be at once handed to him,—Daniel Thwaite the son,—if he would call at the chambers of Messrs. Goffe and Goffe, with a certified copy of the probate of the will of Thomas Thwaite the father.

Nine thousand pounds,—and that to be paid to

him immediately,—on that very day if he chose to call for it! The copy of the probate of the will he had in his pocket at that moment. But he worked out his day's work without going near Goffe and Goffe. And yet he thought much of his money; and once, when one of his employers spoke to him somewhat roughly, he remembered that he was probably a better man than his master. What should he now do with himself and his money,—how bestow himself,—how use it so that he might be of service to the world? He would go no doubt to some country in which there were no earls and no countesses;—but he could go nowhere till he should know what might be his fate with the Earl's daughter, who at present was his destiny. His mind was absolutely divided. In one hour he would say to himself that the poet was certainly right;—and in the next he was sure that the poet must have been wrong. As regarded money, nine thousand pounds was as good to him as any sum that could be named. He could do with that all that he required that money should do for him. Could he at this time have had his own way absolutely, he would have left all the remainder of the wealth behind him, to be shared as they pleased to share it between the Earl and the Countess, and he would have gone at once, taking with him the

girl whom he loved. He would have revelled in the pride of thinking that all of them should say that he had wanted and had won the girl only,—and not the wealth of the Lovels; that he had taken only what was his own, and that his wife would be dependent on him, not he on her. But this was not possible. It was now months since he had heard the girl's voice, or had received any assurance from her that she was still true to him. But, in lieu of this, he had the assurance that she was in possession of enormous wealth, and that she was the recognised cousin of lords and ladies by the dozen.

When the evening came he saw one of his employers and told the man that he wished that his place might be filled. Why was he going? Did he expect to better himself? When was he going? Was he in earnest? Daniel told the truth at once as far as the payment of the money was concerned. He was to receive on the following day a sum of money which had been due to his father, and, when that should have been paid him, it would not suit him to work longer for weekly wages. The tailor grumbled, but there was nothing else to be said. Thwaite might leave them to-morrow if he wished. Thwaite took him at his word and never returned to the shop in Wigmore Street after that night.

On reaching his lodgings he found another letter,

—from Serjeant Bluestone. The Countess had so far given way as to accede to the proposition that there should be a meeting between her daughter and the tailor, and then there had arisen the question as to the manner in which this meeting should be arranged. The Countess would not write herself, nor would she allow her daughter to do so. It was desirable, she thought, that as few people should know of the meeting as possible, and at last, most unwillingly, the Serjeant undertook the task of arranging it. He wrote therefore as follows ;—

“Mr. Serjeant Bluestone presents his compliments to Mr. Daniel Thwaite. Mr. Thwaite has no doubt heard of the result of the trial by which the Countess Lovel and her daughter have succeeded in obtaining the recognition of their rank. It is in contemplation with the Countess and Lady Anna Lovel to go abroad, but Lady Anna is desirous before she goes of seeing the son of the man who was her mother’s staunch friend during many years of suffering. Lady Anna will be at home, at No. — Keppel Street, at eleven o’clock on Monday, 23rd instant, if Mr. Thwaite can make it convenient to call then and there.

“ Bedford Square,
17th November, 18—.

“If Mr. Thwaite could call on the Serjeant before that date, either early in the morning at his house, or on Saturday at his chambers, — —, Inner Temple, it might perhaps be serviceable.”

The postscript had not been added without much consideration. What would the tailor think of this invitation? Would he not be disposed to take it as encouragement in his pernicious suit? Would he not go to Keppel Street with a determination to insist upon the girl's promise? The Serjeant had thought that it would be best to let the thing take its chance. But the Serjeant's wife, and the Serjeant's daughters, and the Countess, too, had all agreed that something if possible should be said to disabuse him of this idea. He was to have nine thousand pounds paid to him. Surely that might be sufficient. But, if he was greedy and wanted more money, more money should be given to him. Only he must be made to understand that the marriage was out of the question. So the Serjeant again gave way, and proposed the interview. Daniel sent back his compliments to the Serjeant and begged to say he would do as he was bid. He would call at the Serjeant's chambers on the Saturday, and in Keppel Street on the following Monday, at the hours named.

On the next morning,—the first morning of his freedom from the servitude of Wigmore Street,—he went to Messrs. Goffe and Goffe. He got up late and breakfasted late, in order that he might feel what it was to be an idle man. “I might now be as idle as the young Earl,” he said to himself; “but were I to attempt it, what should I do with myself? How should I make the hours pass by?” He felt that he was lauding himself as the idea passed through his mind, and struggled to quench his own pride. “And yet,” said he in his thoughts, “is it not fit that I should know myself to be better than he is? If I have no self-confidence, how can I be bold to persevere? The man that works is to him that is idle, as light is to darkness.”

He was admitted at once to Mr. Goff's private room, and was received with a smiling welcome, and an outstretched hand. “I am delighted, Mr. Thwaite, to be able to settle your claim on Lady Lovel with so little delay. I hope you are satisfied with her ladyship's statement of the account.”

“Much more than satisfied with the amount. It appeared to me that I had no legal claim for more than a few hundred pounds.”

“We knew better than that, Mr. Thwaite. We should have seen that no great injury was done. But luckily the Countess has been careful, and has

put down each sum advanced, item by item. Full interest has been allowed at five per cent., as is quite proper. The Countess is an excellent woman of business."

"No doubt, Mr. Goffe. I could have wished that she would have condescended to honour me with a line;—but that is a matter of feeling."

"Oh, Mr. Thwaite; there are reasons;—you must know that there are reasons."

"There may be good reasons or bad reasons."

"And there may be good judgment in such matters and bad judgment. But, however,—. You will like to have this money by a cheque, no doubt. There it is, £9,109 3s. 4d. It is not often that we write one cheque for a bigger sum than that, Mr. Thwaite. Shall I cross it on your bankers? No bankers! With such a sum as that let me recommend you to open an account at once." And Mr. Goffe absolutely walked down to Fleet Street with Daniel Thwaite the tailor, and introduced him at his own bank. The business was soon transacted, and Daniel Thwaite went away westward, a capitalist, with a cheque book in his pocket. What was he to do with himself? He walked east again before the day was over, and made inquiries at various offices as to vessels sailing for Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Quebec. Or

how would it be with him if he should be minded to go east instead of west? So he supplied himself also with information as to vessels for Sydney. And what should he do when he got to the new country? He did not mean to be a tailor. He was astonished to find how little he had as yet realised in his mind the details of the exodus which he had proposed to himself.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I WILL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR NOTHING.

ON the Saturday, Daniel was at the Serjeant's chambers early in the morning,—long before the hour at which the Serjeant himself was wont to attend. No time had in fact been named, and the tailor had chosen to suppose that as he had been desired to be early in Bedford Square, so had it also been intended that he should be early in the Temple. For two hours he walked about the passages and the courts, thinking ill of the lawyer for being so late at his business, and endeavouring to determine what he would do with himself. He had not a friend in the world, unless Lady Anna were a friend;—hardly an acquaintance. And yet, remembering what his father had done, what he himself had helped to do, he thought that he ought to have had many friends. Those very persons who were now his bitterest enemies, the Countess and all they who had supported her, should have been bound

to him by close ties. Yet he knew that it was impossible that they should not hate him. He could understand their feelings with reference to their own rank, though to him that rank was contemptible. Of course he was alone. Of course he would fail. He was almost prepared to acknowledge as much to the Serjeant. He had heard of a certain vessel that would start in three days for the rising colony called New South Wales, and he almost wished that he had taken his passage in her.

At ten o'clock he had been desired to call at eleven, and as the clock struck eleven he knocked at the Serjeant's door. "Serjeant Bluestone is not here yet," said the clerk, who was disposed to be annoyed by the man's pertinacity.

"He told me to come early in the morning, and this is not early."

"He is not here yet, sir."

"You told me to come at eleven, and it is past eleven."

"It is one minute past, and you can sit down and wait for him if you please." Daniel refused to wait, and was again about to depart in his wrath, when the Serjeant appeared upon the stairs. He introduced himself, and expressed regret that he should have found his visitor there before him.

Daniel, muttering something, followed the lawyer into his room, and then the door was closed. He stood till he was invited to sit, and was determined to make himself disagreeable. This man was one of his enemies,—was one who no doubt thought little of him because he was a tailor, who suspected his motives, and was anxious to rob him of his bride. The Serjeant retired for a moment to an inner room, while the tailor girded up his loins and prepared himself for battle.

“Mr. Thwaite,” said the Serjeant, as he re-entered the room, “you probably know that I have been counsel for Lady Lovel and her daughter in the late trial.” Daniel assented by a nod of his head. “My connection with the Countess would naturally have been then closed. We have gained our cause, and there would be an end of it. But as things have turned out it has been otherwise. Lady Anna Lovel has been staying with Mrs. Bluestone.”

“In Bedford Square?”

“Yes, at my house.”

“I did not know. The Countess told me she was not in Keppel Street, but refused to inform me where she was staying. I should not have interfered with her ladyship’s plans, had she been less secret with me.”

“Surely it was unnecessary that she should tell you.”

“Quite unnecessary;—but hardly unnatural after all that has occurred. As the Countess is with you only a friend of late date, you are probably unaware of the former friendship which existed between us. There was a time in which I certainly did not think that Lady Lovel would ever decline to speak to me about her daughter. But all this is nothing to you, Serjeant Bluestone.”

“It is something to me, Mr. Thwaite, as her friend. Is there no reason why she should have treated you thus? Ask your own conscience.”

“My conscience is clear in the matter.”

“I have sent for you here, Mr. Thwaite, to ask you whether you cannot yourself understand that this which you have proposed to do must make you an enemy to the Countess, and annul and set aside all that kindness which you have shown her? I put it to your own reason. Do you think it possible that the Countess should be otherwise than outraged at the proposition you have made to her?”

“I have made no proposition to her ladyship.”

“Have you made none to her daughter?”

“Certainly I have. I have asked her to be my wife.”

“Come, Mr. Thwaite, do not palter with me.”

“Palter with you! Who dares to say that I palter? I have never paltered. Paltering is——lying, as I take it. Let the Countess be my enemy. I have not said that she should not be so. She might have answered my letter, I think, when the old man died. In our rank of life we should have done so. It may be different with lords and titled ladies. Let it pass, however. I did not mean to make any complaint. I came here because you sent for me.”

“Yes;—I did send for you,” said the Serjeant, wishing with all his heart that he had never been persuaded to take a step which imposed upon him so great a difficulty. “I did send for you. Lady Anna Lovel has expressed a wish to see you, before she leaves London.”

“I will wait upon Lady Anna Lovel.”

“I need hardly tell you that her wish has been opposed by her friends.”

“No doubt it was.”

“But she has said with so much earnestness that she cannot consider herself to be absolved from the promise which she made to you when she was a child——”

“She was no child when she made it.”

“It does not signify. She cannot be absolved from the promise which I suppose she did make——”

"She certainly made it, Serjeant Bluestone."

"Will you allow me to continue my statement? It will not occupy you long. She assures her mother that she cannot consider herself to be absolved from that promise without your sanction. She has been living in my house for some weeks, and I do not myself doubt in the least that were she thus freed an alliance would soon be arranged between her and her cousin."

"I have heard of that—alliance."

"It would be in every respect a most satisfactory and happy marriage. The young Earl has behaved with great consideration and forbearance in abstaining from pushing his claims."

"In abstaining from asking for that which he did not believe to be his own."

"You had better hear me to the end, Mr. Thwaite. All the friends of the two young people desire it. The Earl himself is warmly attached to his cousin."

"So am I,—and have been for many years."

"We all believe that she loves him."

"Let her say so to me, Serjeant Bluestone, and there shall be an end of it all. It seems to me that Lord Lovel and I have different ideas about a woman. I would not take the hand of a girl who told me that she loved another man, even though

she was as dear to me, as,—as Lady Anna is dear to me now. And as for what she might have in her hand, it would go for naught with me, though I might have to face beggary without her. It seems to me that Lord Lovel is less particular in this matter.”

“I do not see that you and I have anything to do with that,” replied the Serjeant, hardly knowing what to say.

“I have nothing to do with Lord Lovel, certainly,—nor has he with me. As to his cousin,—it is for her to choose.”

“We think,—I am only telling you what we think;—but we think, Mr. Thwaite, that the young lady’s affections are fixed on her cousin. It is natural that they should be so; and watching her as closely as we can, we believe such to be the case. I will be quite on the square with you, Mr. Thwaite.”

“With me and with everybody else, I hope, Serjeant Bluestone.”

“I hope so,” said the Serjeant, laughing; “but at any rate I will be so with you now. We have been unable to get from Lady Anna any certain reply,—any assurance of her own wishes. She has told her mother that she cannot accept Lord Lovel’s addresses till she has seen you.” The

Serjeant in this was not quite on the square, as Lady Anna had never said so. "We believe that she considers it necessary, to her conscience, to be made free by your permission, before she can follow her own inclinations and accede to those of all her friends."

"She shall have my permission in a moment,—if she will ask for it."

"Could you not be more generous even than that?"

"How more generous, Serjeant Bluestone?"

"Offer it to her unasked. You have already said that you would not accept her hand if you did not believe that you had her heart also,—and the sentiment did you honour. Think of her condition, and be generous to her."

"Generous to her! You mean generous to Lady Lovel,—generous to Lord Lovel,—generous to all the Lovels except her. It seems to me that all the generosity is to be on one side."

"By no means. We can be generous too."

"If that be generosity, I will be generous. I will offer her that permission. I will not wait till she asks for it. I will beg her to tell me if it be true that she loves this cousin, and if she can say that it is true, she shall want no permission from me to be free. She shall be free."

“It is not a question, you see, between yourself and Lord Lovel. It is quite out of the question that she should in any event become your wife. Even had she power to do it——”

“She has the power.”

“Practically she has no such power, Mr. Thwaite. A young person such as Lady Anna Lovel is and must be under the control of her natural guardian. She is so altogether. Her mother could not,—and would not,—constrain her to any marriage; but has quite sufficient power over her to prevent any marriage. Lady Anna has never for a moment supposed that she could become your wife since she learned what were the feelings of her mother and her family.” The Serjeant certainly did not keep his promise of being “on the square.” “But your generosity is necessary to enable Lady Lovel to bring to a happy termination all those sufferings with which her life has been afflicted.”

“I do not owe much to the Countess; but if it be generous to do as I have said I would do,—I will be generous. I will tell her daughter, without any question asked from her, that she is free to marry her cousin if she wishes.”

So far the Serjeant, though he had not been altogether as truthful as he had promised, had been discreet. He had said nothing to set the tailor

vehemently against the Lovel interest, and had succeeded in obtaining a useful pledge. But, in his next attempt, he was less wise. "I think, you know, Mr. Thwaite, that the Countess also has been generous."

"As how?"

"You have received £9,000 already, I believe."

"I have received what I presume to be my own. If I have had more it shall be refunded."

"No;—no; by no means. Taking a liberal view of the matter, as the Countess was bound to do in honour, she was, I think, right in paying you what she has paid."

"I want nothing from her in what you call honour. I want nothing liberal. If the money be not mine in common honesty she shall have it back again. I want nothing but my own."

"I think you are a little high flown, Mr. Thwaite."

"I dare say I may be,—to the thinking of a lawyer."

"The Countess, who is in truth your friend,—and will always be your friend if you will only be amenable to reason,—has been delighted to think that you are now in possession of a sum of money which will place you above want."

"The Countess is very kind."

“And I can say more than that. She and all her friends are aware how much is due to your father’s son. If you will only aid us in our present project, if you will enable Lady Anna to become the wife of her cousin the Earl, much more shall be done than the mere payment of the debt which was due to you. It has been proposed to settle on you for life an annuity of four hundred pounds a year. To this the Countess, Earl Lovel, and Lady Anna will all agree.”

“Has the consent of Lady Anna been asked?” demanded the tailor, in a voice which was low, but which the Serjeant felt at the moment to be dangerous.

“You may take my word that it shall be forthcoming,” said the Serjeant.

“I will take your word for nothing, Serjeant Bluestone. I do not think that among you all, you would dare to make such a proposition to Lady Anna Lovel, and I wonder that you should dare to make it to me. What have you seen in me to lead you to suppose that I would sell myself for a bribe? And how can you have been so unwise as to offer it after I have told you that she shall be free,—if she chooses to be free? But it is all one. You deal in subterfuges till you think it impossible that a man should be honest. You mine underground, till your

eyes see nothing in the open daylight. You walk crookedly, till a straight path is an abomination to you. Four hundred a year is nothing to me for such a purpose as this,—would have been nothing to me even though no penny had been paid to me of the money which is my own. I can easily understand what it is that makes the Earl so devoted a lover. His devotion began when he had been told that the money was hers and not his,—and that in no other way could he get it. Mine began when no one believed that she would ever have a shilling for her fortune,—when all who bore her name and her mother's ridiculed their claim. Mine was growing when my father first asked me whether I grudged that he should spend all that he had in their behalf. Mine came from giving. His springs from the desire to get. Make the four hundred, four thousand;—make it eight thousand, Serjeant Bluestone, and offer it to him. I also will agree. With him you may succeed. Good morning, Serjeant Bluestone. On Monday next I will not be worse than my word,—even though you have offered me a bribe.”

The Serjeant let the tailor go without a word further,—not, indeed, having a word to say. He had been insulted in his own chambers,—told that his word was worthless, and his honesty question-

able. But he had been so told, that at the moment he had been unable to stop the speaker. He had sat, and smiled, and stroked his chin, and looked at the tailor as though he had been endeavouring to comfort himself with the idea that the man addressing him was merely an ignorant, half-mad, enthusiastic tailor, from whom decent conduct could not be expected. He was still smiling when Daniel Thwaite closed the door, and he almost laughed as he asked his clerk whether that energetic gentleman had taken himself down-stairs. "Oh, yes, sir; he glared at me when I opened the door, and rushed down four steps at a time." But, on the whole, the Serjeant was contented with the interview. It would, no doubt, have been better had he said nothing of the four hundred a year. But in the offering of bribes there is always that danger. One can never be sure who will swallow his *douceur* at an easy gulp, so as hardly to betray an effort, and who will refuse even to open his lips. And then the latter man has the briber so much at advantage. When the luscious morsel has been refused, it is so easy to be indignant, so pleasant to be enthusiastically virtuous! The bribe had been refused, and so far the Serjeant had failed;—but the desired promise had been made, and the Serjeant felt certain that it would be kept. He did not doubt but that

Daniel Thwaite would himself offer the girl her freedom. But there was something in the man, though he was a tailor. He had an eye and a voice, and it might be that freedom offered, as he could offer it, would not be accepted.

Daniel, as he went out into the court from the lawyer's presence, was less satisfied than the lawyer. He had told the lawyer that his word was worth nothing, and yet he had believed much that the lawyer had said to him. The lawyer had told him that the girl loved her cousin, and only wanted his permission to be free that she might give her hand and her heart together to the young lord. Was it not natural that she should wish to do so? Within each hour, almost within each minute, he regarded the matter in lights that were perfectly antagonistic to each other. It was natural that she should wish to be a Countess, and that she should love a young lord who was gentle and beautiful;—and she should have his permission accorded freely. But then, again, it was most unnatural, bestial, and almost monstrous, that a girl should change her love for a man, going from one man to another, simply because the latter man was gilt with gold, and decked with jewels, and sweet with perfume from a hairdresser's. The poet must have been wrong there. If love be anything but a dream, surely it

must adhere to the person, and not be liable to change at every offered vantage of name or birth, of rank or wealth.

But she should have the offer. She should certainly have the offer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SERJEANT AND MRS. BLUESTONE AT HOME.

LADY ANNA was not told till the Saturday that she was to meet her lover, the tailor, on the following Monday. She was living at this time, as it were, in chains, though the chains were gilded. It was possible that she might be off at any moment with Daniel Thwaite,—and now the more possible because he had money at his command. If this should occur, then would the game which the Countess and her friends were playing, be altogether lost. Then would the checkmate have been absolute. The reader will have known that such a step had never been contemplated by the man, and will also have perceived that it would have been altogether opposed to the girl's character; but it is hoped that the reader has looked more closely into the man's motives and the girl's character than even her mother was able to do. The Countess had thought that she had known her daughter. She had been mistaken,

and now there was hardly anything of which she could not suspect her girl to be capable. Lady Anna was watched, therefore, during every minute of the four and twenty hours. A policeman was told off to protect the house at night from rope ladders or any other less cumbrous ingenuity. The servants were set on guard. Sarah, the lady's-maid, followed her mistress almost like a ghost when the poor young lady went to her bedroom. Mrs. Bluestone, or one of the girls, was always with her, either indoors or out of doors. Out of doors, indeed, she never went without more guards than one. A carriage had been hired,—a luxury with which Mrs. Bluestone had hitherto dispensed,—and the carriage was always there when Lady Anna suggested that she should like to leave the house. She was warmly invited to go shopping, and made to understand that in the way of ordinary shopping she could buy what she pleased. But her life was inexpressibly miserable. “What does mamma mean to do?” she said to Mrs. Bluestone on the Saturday morning.

“In what way, my dear?”

“Where does she mean to go? She won't live always in Keppel Street?”

“No,—I do not think that she will live always in Keppel Street. It depends a good deal upon you, I think.”

“I will go wherever she pleases to take me. The lawsuit is over now, and I don't know why we should stay here. I am sure you can't like it.”

To tell the truth, Mrs. Bluestone did not like it at all. Circumstances had made her a gaoler, but by nature she was very ill constituted for that office. The harshness of it was detestable to her, and then there was no reason whatever why she should sacrifice her domestic comfort for the Lovels. The thing had grown upon them, till the Lovels had become an incubus to her. Personally, she liked Lady Anna, but she was unable to treat Lady Anna as she would treat any other girl that she liked. She had told the Serjeant more than once that she could not endure it much longer. And the Serjeant did not like it better than did his wife. It was all a labour of love, and a most unpleasant labour. “The Countess must take her away,” the Serjeant had said. And now the Serjeant had been told by the tailor, in his own chambers, that his word was worth nothing!

“To tell you the truth, Lady Anna, we none of us like it,—not because we do not like you, but because the whole thing is disagreeable. You are creating very great misery, my dear, because you are obstinate.”

“Because I won't marry my cousin?”

"No, my dear; not because you won't marry your cousin. I have never advised you to marry your cousin, unless you could love him. I don't think girls should ever be told to marry this man or that. But it is very proper that they should be told not to marry this man or that. You are making everybody about you miserable, because you will not give up a most improper engagement, made with a man who is in every respect beneath you."

"I wish I were dead," said Lady Anna.

"It is very easy to say that, my dear; but what you ought to wish is, to do your duty."

"I do wish to do my duty, Mrs. Bluestone."

"It can't be dutiful to stand out against your mother in this way. You are breaking your mother's heart. And if you were to do this thing, you would soon find that you had broken your own. It is downright obstinacy. I don't like to be harsh, but as you are here, in my charge, I am bound to tell you the truth."

"I wish mamma would let me go away," said Lady Anna, bursting into tears.

"She will let you go at once, if you will only make the promise that she asks of you." In saying this, Mrs. Bluestone was hardly more upon the square than her husband had been, for she knew very well, at that moment, that Lady Anna was to

go to Keppel Street early on the Monday morning, and she had quite made up her mind that her guest should not come back to Bedford Square. She had now been moved to the special severity which she had shown by certain annoyances of her own to which she had been subjected by the presence of Lady Anna in her house. She could neither entertain her friends nor go out to be entertained by them, and had told the Serjeant more than once that a great mistake had been made in having the girl there at all. But judgment had operated with her as well as feeling. It was necessary that Lady Anna should be made to understand before she saw the tailor that she could not be happy, could not be comfortable, could not be other than very wretched,—till she had altogether dismissed her low-born lover.

“I did not think you would be so unkind to me,” sobbed Lady Anna through her tears.

“I do not mean to be unkind, but you must be told the truth. Every minute that you spend in thinking of that man is a disgrace to you.”

“Then I shall be disgraced all my life,” said Lady Anna, bursting out of the room.

On that day the Serjeant dined at his club, but came home about nine o'clock. It had all been planned so that the information might be given in the most solemn manner possible. The two girls

were sitting up in the drawing-room with the guest who, since the conversation in the morning, had only seen Mrs. Bluestone during dinner. First there was the knock at the door, and then, after a quarter of an hour, which was spent up-stairs in perfect silence, there came a message. Would Lady Anna have the kindness to go to the Serjeant in the dining-room. In silence she left the room, and in silence descended the broad staircase. The Serjeant and Mrs. Bluestone were sitting on one side of the fireplace, the Serjeant in his own peculiar arm-chair, and the lady close to the fender, while a seat opposite to them had been placed for Lady Anna. The room was gloomy with dark red curtains and dark flock paper. On the table there burned two candles, and no more. The Serjeant got up and motioned Lady Anna to a chair. As soon as she had seated herself, he began his speech. "My dear young lady, you must be no doubt aware that you are at present causing a great deal of trouble to your best friends."

"I don't want to cause anybody trouble," said Lady Anna, thinking that the Serjeant in speaking of her best friends alluded to himself and his wife. "I only want to go away."

"I am coming to that directly, my dear. I cannot suppose that you do not understand the extent of the sorrow that you have inflicted on your

parent by,—by the declaration which you made to Lord Lovel [in regard to Mr. Daniel Thwaite." There is nothing, perhaps, in the way of exhortation and scolding which the ordinary daughter,—or son,—dislikes so much as to be told of her, or his, "parent." "My dear fellow, your father will be annoyed," is taken in good part. "What will mamma say?" is seldom received amiss. But when young people have their "parents" thrown at them, they feel themselves to be aggrieved, and become at once antagonistic. Lady Anna became strongly antagonistic. If her mother, who had always been to her her "own, own mamma," was going to be her parent, there must be an end of all hope of happiness. She said nothing, but compressed her lips together. She would not allow herself to be led an inch any way by a man who talked to her of her parent. "The very idea of such a marriage as this man had suggested to you under the guise of friendship was dreadful to her. It could be no more than an idea;—but that you should have entertained it was dreadful. She has since asked you again and again to repudiate the idea, and hitherto you have refused to obey."

"I can never know what mamma really wants till I go and live with her again."

"I am coming to that, Lady Anna. The Countess

has informed Mrs. Bluestone that you had refused to give the desired promise unless you should be allowed to see Mr. Daniel Thwaite, intimating, I presume, that his permission would be necessary to free you from your imaginary bond to him."

"It would be necessary."

"Very well. The Countess naturally felt an abhorrence at allowing you again to be in the presence of one so much beneath you,—who had ventured to address you as he has done. It was a most natural feeling. But it has occurred to Mrs. Bluestone and myself, that as you entertain this idea of an obligation, you should be allowed to extricate yourself from it after your own fashion. You are to meet Mr. Thwaite,—on Monday,—at eleven o'clock,—in Keppel Street."

"And I am not to come back again?"

When one executes the office of gaoler without fee or reward, giving up to one's prisoner one's best bedroom, and having a company dinner, more or less, cooked for one's prisoner every day, one does not like to be told too plainly of the anticipated joys of enfranchisement. Mrs. Bluestone, who had done her best both for the mother and the girl, and had done it all from pure motherly sympathy, was a little hurt. "I am sure, Lady Anna, we shall not wish you to return," she said.

“ Oh, Mrs. Bluestone, you don't understand me. I don't think you know how unhappy I am because of mamma.”

Mrs. Bluestone relented at once. “ If you will only do as your mamma wishes, everything will be made happy for you.”

“ Mr. Thwaite will be in Keppel Street at eleven o'clock on Monday,” continued the Serjeant, “ and an opportunity will then be given you of obtaining from him a release from that unfortunate promise which I believe you once made him. I may tell you that he has expressed himself willing to give you that release. The debt due to him, or rather to his late father, has now been paid by the estate, and I think you will find that he will make no difficulty. After that anything that he may require shall be done to forward his views.”

“ Am I to take my things ? ” she asked.

“ Sarah shall pack them up, and they shall be sent after you if it be decided that you are to stay with Lady Lovel.” They then went to bed.

In all this neither the Serjeant nor his wife had been “ on the square.” Neither of them had spoken truly to the girl. Mrs. Bluestone had let the Countess know that with all her desire to assist her ladyship, and her ladyship's daughter, she could not receive Lady Anna back in Bedford

Square. As for that sending of her things upon certain conditions,—it was a simple falsehood. The things would certainly be sent. And the Serjeant, without uttering an actual lie, had endeavoured to make the girl think that the tailor was in pursuit of money,—and of money only, though he must have known that it was not so. The Serjeant no doubt hated a lie,—as most of us do hate lies ; and had a strong conviction that the devil is the father of them. But then the lies which he hated, and as to the parentage of which he was quite certain, were lies told to him. Who yet ever met a man who did not in his heart of hearts despise an attempt made by others to deceive—himself? They whom we have found to be gentler in their judgment towards attempts made in another direction have been more than one or two. The object which the Serjeant had in view was so good that it seemed to him to warrant some slight deviation from parallelogrammatic squareness ;—though he held it as one of his first rules of life that the end cannot justify the means.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IT IS STILL TRUE.

ON Sunday they all went to church, and not a word was said about the tailor. Alice Bluestone was tender and valedictory; Mrs. Bluestone was courteous and careful; the Serjeant was solemn and civil. Before the day was over Lady Anna was quite sure that it was not intended that she should come back to Bedford Square. Words were said by the two girls, and by Sarah the waiting-maid, which made it certain that the packing up was to be a real packing up. No hindrance was offered to her when she busied herself about her own dresses and folded up her stock of gloves and ribbons. On Monday morning after breakfast, Mrs. Bluestone nearly broke down. "I am sure, my dear," she said, "we have liked you very much, and if there has been anything uncomfortable it has been from unfortunate circumstances." The Serjeant bade God bless her when he walked off half an hour before

the carriage came to take her, and she knew that she was to sit no longer as a guest at the Serjeant's table. She kissed the girls, was kissed by Mrs. Bluestone, got into the carriage with the maid, and in her heart said good-bye to Bedford Square for ever.

It was but three minutes' drive from the Serjeant's house to that in which her mother lived, and in that moment of time she was hardly able to realise the fact that within half an hour she would be once more in the presence of Daniel Thwaite. She did not at present at all understand why this thing was to be done. When last she had seen her mother, the Countess had solemnly declared, had almost sworn, that they two should never see each other again. And now the meeting was so close at hand that the man must already be near her. She put up her face to the carriage window as though she almost expected to see him on the pavement. And how would the meeting be arranged? Would her mother be present? She took it for granted that her mother would be present. She certainly anticipated no pleasure from the meeting,—though she would be glad, very glad, to see Daniel Thwaite once again. Before she had time to answer herself a question the carriage had stopped, and she could see her mother at the drawing-room window. She

trembled as she went up-stairs, and hardly could speak when she found herself in her mother's presence. If her mother had worn the old brown gown it would have been better, but there she was, arrayed in black silk,—in silk that was new and stiff and broad and solemn,—a parent rather than a mother, and every inch a Countess. "I am so glad to be with you again, mamma."

"I shall not be less glad to have you with me, Anna,—if you will behave yourself with propriety."

"Give me a kiss, mamma." Then the Countess bent her head and allowed her daughter's lips to touch her cheeks. In old days,—days that were not so very old,—she would kiss her child as though such embraces were the only food that nourished her.

"Come up-stairs, and I will show you your room." Then the daughter followed the mother in solemn silence. "You have heard that Mr. Daniel Thwaite is coming here, to see you, at your own request. It will not be many minutes before he is here. Take off your bonnet." Again Lady Anna silently did as she was bid. "It would have been better,—very much better,—that you should have done as you were desired without subjecting me to this indignity. But as you have taken into your head an idea that you cannot be absolved from an

impossible engagement without his permission, I have submitted. Do not let it be long, and let me hear then that all this nonsense is over. He has got what he desires, as a very large sum of money has been paid to him." Then there came a knock at the door from Sarah, who just showed her face to say that Mr. Thwaite was in the room below. "Now go down. In ten minutes I shall expect to see you here again;—or, after that, I shall come down to you." Lady Anna took her mother by the hand, looking up with beseeching eyes into her mother's face. "Go, my dear, and let this be done as quickly as possible. I believe that you have too great a sense of propriety to let him do more than speak to you. Remember,—you are the daughter of an earl; and remember also all that I have done to establish your right for you."

"Mamma, I do not know what to do. I am afraid."

"Shall I go with you, Anna?"

"No, mamma;—it will be better without you. You do not know how good he is."

"If he will abandon this madness he shall be my friend of friends."

"Oh, mamma, I am afraid. But I had better go." Then, trembling she left the room and slowly descended the stairs. She had certainly spoken the

truth in saying that she was afraid. Up to this moment she had not positively made up her mind whether she would or would not yield to the entreaties of her friends. She had decided upon nothing,—leaving in fact the arbitrament of her faith in the hands of the man who had now come to see her. Throughout all that had been said and done her sympathies had been with him, and had become the stronger the more her friends had reviled him. She knew that they had spoken evil of him, not because he was evil,—but with the unholy view of making her believe what was false. She had seen through all this, and had been aroused by it to a degree of firmness of which her mother had not imagined her to be capable. Had they confined themselves to the argument of present fitness, admitting the truth and honesty of the man,—and admitting also that his love for her and hers for him had been the natural growth of the familiar friendship of their childhood and youth, their chance of moulding her to their purposes would have been better. As it was they had never argued with her on the subject without putting forward some statement which she found herself bound to combat. She was told continually that she had degraded herself; and she could understand that another Lady Anna might degrade herself most thoroughly

by listening to the suit of a tailor. But she had not disgraced herself. Of that she was sure, though she could not well explain to them her reasons when they accused her. Circumstances, and her mother's mode of living, had thrown her into intimacy with this man. For all practical purposes of life he had been her equal,—and being so had become her dearest friend. To take his hand, to lean on his arm, to ask his assistance, to go to him in her troubles, to listen to his words and to believe them, to think of him as one who might always be trusted, had become a second nature to her. Of course she loved him. And now the martyrdom through which she had passed in Bedford Square had changed,—unconsciously as regarded her own thoughts,—but still had changed her feelings in regard to her cousin. He was not to her now the bright and shining thing, the godlike Phœbus, which he had been in Wyndham Street and at Yoxham. In all their lectures to her about her title and grandeur they had succeeded in inculcating an idea of the solemnity of rank, but had robbed it in her eyes of all its grace. She had only been the more tormented because the fact of her being Lady Anna Lovel had been fully established. The feeling in her bosom which was most hostile to the tailor's claim upon her was her pity for her mother.

She entered the room very gently, and found him standing by the table, with his hands clasped together. "Sweetheart!" he said, as soon as he saw her, calling her by a name which he used to use when they were out in the fields together in Cumberland.

"Daniel!" Then he came to her and took her hand. "If you have anything to say, Daniel, you must be very quick, because mamma will come in ten minutes."

"Have you anything to say, sweetheart?" She had much to say if she only knew how to say it; but she was silent. "Do you love me, Anna?" Still she was silent. "If you have ceased to love me, pray tell me so,—in all honesty." But yet she was silent. "If you are true to me,—as I am to you, with all my heart,—will you not tell me so?"

"Yes," she murmured.

He heard her, though no other could have done so.

"A lover's ears will hear the lowest sound
When the suspicious head of theft is stopped."

"If so," said he, again taking her hand, "this story they have told me is untrue."

"What story, Daniel?" But she withdrew her hand quickly as she asked him.

“Nay;—it is mine; it shall be mine if you love me, dear. I will tell you what story. They have said that you love your cousin, Earl Lovel.”

“No;” said she scornfully, “I have never said so. It is not true.”

“You cannot love us both.” His eye was fixed upon hers, that eye to which in past years she had been accustomed to look for guidance, sometimes in joy and sometimes in fear, and which she had always obeyed. “Is not that true?”

“Oh yes;—that is true of course.”

“You have never told him that you loved him.”

“Oh, never.”

“But you have told me so,—more than once; eh, sweetheart?”

“Yes.”

“And it was true?”

She paused a moment, and then gave him the same answer, “Yes.”

“And it is still true?”

She repeated the word a third time. “Yes.” But she again so spoke that none but a lover’s ear could have heard it.

“If it be so, nothing but the hand of God shall separate us. You know that they sent for me to come here.” She nodded her head. “Do you know why? In order that I might abandon my

claim to your hand. I will never give it up. But I made them a promise, and I will keep it. I told them that if you preferred Lord Lovel to me, I would at once make you free of your promise,—that I would offer to you such freedom, if it would be freedom. I do offer it to you ;—or rather, Anna, I would have offered it, had you not already answered the question. How can I offer it now ?” Then he paused, and stood regarding her with fixed eyes. “But there,—there ; take back your word if you will. If you think that it is better to be the wife of a lord, because he is a lord, though you do not love him, than to lie upon the breast of the man you do love,—you are free from me.” Now was the moment in which she must obey her mother, and satisfy her friends, and support her rank, and decide that she would be one of the noble ladies of England, if such decision were to be made at all. She looked up into his face, and thought that after all it was handsomer than that of the young Earl. He stood thus with dilated nostrils, and fire in his eyes, and his lips just parted, and his head erect,—a very man. Had she been so minded she would not have dared to take his offer. They surely had not known the man when they allowed him to have this interview. He repeated his words. “You

are free if you will say so ;—but you must answer me.”

“I did answer you, Daniel.”

“My noble girl! And now, my heart’s only treasure, I may speak out and tell you what I think. It cannot be good that a woman should purchase rank and wealth by giving herself to a man she does not love. It must be bad,—monstrously bad. I never believed it when they told it me of you. And yet when I did not hear of you or see you for months——”

“It was not my fault.”

“No, sweetheart ;—and I tried to find comfort by so saying to myself. ‘If she really loves me, she will be true,’ I said. And yet who was I that I should think that you would suffer so much for me? But I will repay you,—if the truth and service of a life may repay such a debt as that. At any rate hear this from me ;—I will never doubt again.” And as he spoke he was moving towards her, thinking to take her in his arms, when the door was opened and Countess Lovel was within the room. The tailor was the first to speak. “Lady Lovel, I have asked your daughter, and I find that it is her wish to adhere to the engagement which she made with me in Cumberland. I need hardly say that it is my wish also.”

“Anna! Is this true?”

“Mamma; mamma! Oh, mamma!”

“If it be so I will never speak word to you more.”

“You will; you will! Do not look at me like that. You will speak to me!”

“You shall never again be child of mine.” But in saying this she had forgotten herself, and now she remembered her proper cue. “I do not believe a word of it. The man has come here and has insulted and frightened you. He knows,—he must know,—that such a marriage is impossible. It can never take place. It shall never take place. Mr. Thwaite, as you are a living man, you shall never live to marry my daughter.”

“My lady, in this matter of marriage your daughter must no doubt decide for herself. Even now, by all the laws of God,—and I believe of man too,—she is beyond your control either to give her in marriage or to withhold her. In a few months she will be as much her own mistress as you now are yours.”

“Sir, I am not asking you about my child. You are insolent.”

“I came here, Lady Lovel, because I was sent for.”

“And now you had better leave us. You made a promise which you have broken.”

“By heavens, no. I made a promise and I have kept it. I said that I would offer her freedom, and I have done so. I told her, and I tell her again now, that if she will say that she prefers her cousin to me, I will retire.” The Countess looked at him and also recognised the strength of his face, almost feeling that the man had grown in personal dignity since he had received the money that was due to him. “She does not prefer the Earl. She has given her heart to me; and I hold it,—and will hold it. Look up, dear, and tell your mother whether what I say be true.”

“It is true,” said Lady Anna.

“Then may the blight of hell rest upon you both!” said the Countess, rushing to the door. But she returned. “Mr. Thwaite,” she said, “I will trouble you at once to leave the house, and never more to return to it.”

“I will leave it certainly. Good bye, my own love.” He attempted again to take the girl by the hand, but the Countess, with violence, rushed at them and separated them. “If you but touch him, I will strike you,” she said to her daughter. “As for you, it is her money that you want. If it be necessary, you shall have, not hers, but mine. Now go.”

“That is a slander, Lady Lovel. I want no

one's money. I want the girl I love,—whose heart I have won; and I will have her. Good morning, Lady Lovel. Dear, dear Anna, for this time good bye. Do not let any one make you think that I can ever be untrue to you." The girl only looked at him. Then he left the room; and the mother and the daughter were alone together. The Countess stood erect, looking at her child, while Lady Anna, standing also, kept her eyes fixed upon the ground. "Am I to believe it all,—as that man says?" asked the Countess.

"Yes, mamma."

"Do you mean to say that you have renewed your engagement to that low-born wretch?"

"Mamma,—he is not a wretch."

"Do you contradict me? After all, is it come to this?"

"Mamma,—you, you—cursed me."

"And you will be cursed. Do you think that you will do such wickedness as this, that you can destroy all that I have done for you, that you make yourself the cause of ruin to a whole family, and that you will not be punished for it? You say that you love me."

"You know that I love you, mamma."

"And yet you do not scruple to drive me mad."

"Mamma, it was you who brought us together."

“Ungrateful child! Where else could I take you then?”

“But I was there,—and of course I loved him. I could not cease to love him because,—because they say that I am a grand lady.”

“Listen to me, Anna. You shall never marry him; never. With my own hands I will kill him first;—or you.” The girl stood looking into her mother’s face, and trembling. “Do you understand that?”

“You do not mean it, mamma.”

“By the God above me, I do! Do you think that I will stop at anything now;—after having done so much? Do you think that I will live to see my daughter the wife of a foul, sweltering tailor? No, by heavens! He tells you that when you are twenty-one, you will not be subject to my control. I warn you to look to it. I will not lose my control, unless when I see you married to some husband fitting your condition in life. For the present you will live in your own room, as I will live in mine. I will hold no intercourse whatever with you, till I have constrained you to obey me.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LET HER DIE.

AFTER the scene which was described in the last chapter there was a very sad time indeed in Keppel Street. The Countess had been advised by the Serjeant and Mrs. Bluestone to take her daughter immediately abroad, in the event of the interview with Daniel Thwaite being unsatisfactory. It was believed by all concerned, by the Bluestones, and the Goffes, by Sir William Patterson who had been told of the coming interview, and by the Countess herself, that this would not be the case. They had all thought that Lady Anna would come out from that meeting disengaged and free to marry whom she would,—and they thought also that within a very few weeks of her emancipation she would accept her cousin's hand. The Solicitor-General had communicated with the Earl, who was still in town, and the Earl again believed that he might win the heiress. But should the girl prove

obstinate;—"take her away at once,—very far away;—to Rome, or some such place as that." Such had been Mrs. Bluestone's advice, and in those days Rome was much more distant than it is now. "And don't let anybody know where you are going," added the Serjeant,—“except Mr. Goffe.” The Countess had assented;—but when the moment came, there was reasons against her sudden departure. Mr. Goffe told her that she must wait at any rate for another fortnight. The presence of herself and her daughter were necessary in London for the signing of deeds and for the completion of the now merely formal proofs of identity. And money was again scarce. A great deal of money had been spent lately, and unless money was borrowed without security, and at a great cost,—to which Mr. Goffe was averse,—the sum needed could hardly be provided at once. Mr. Goffe recommended that no day earlier than the 20th December should be fixed for their departure.

It was now the end of November; and it became a question how the intermediate time should be passed. The Countess was resolved that she would hold no pleasant intercourse at all with her daughter. She would not even tell the girl of her purpose of going abroad. From hour to hour she assured herself with still increasing obduracy that nothing but

severity could avail anything. The girl must be cowed and frightened into absolute submission,—even though at the expense of her health. Even though it was to be effected by the absolute crushing of her spirits,—this must be done. Though at the cost of her life, it must be done. This woman had lived for the last twenty years with but one object before her eyes,—an object sometimes seeming to be near, more often distant, and not unfrequently altogether beyond her reach, but which had so grown upon her imagination as to become the heaven to which her very soul aspired. To be and to be known to be among the highly born, the so-called noble, the titled from old dates,—to be of those who were purely aristocratic, had been all the world to her. As a child,—the child of well-born but poor parents, she had received the idea. In following it out she had thrown all thoughts of love to the wind and had married a reprobate earl. Then had come her punishment,—or, as she had conceived it, her most unmerited misfortunes. For many years of her life her high courage and persistent demeanour had almost atoned for the vice of her youth. The love of rank was strong in her bosom as ever, but it was fostered for her child rather than for herself. Through long, tedious, friendless, poverty-stricken years she had endured

all, still assuring herself that the day would come when the world should call the sweet plant that grew by her side by its proper name. The little children hooted after her daughter, calling her girl in derision *The Lady Anna*,—when *Lady Anna* had been more poorly clad and blessed with less of the comforts of home than any of them. Years would roll by, and they should live to know that the *Lady Anna*,—the sport of their infantine cruelty,—was *Lady Anna* indeed. And as the girl became a woman the dream was becoming a reality. The rank, the title, the general acknowledgment and the wealth would all be there. Then came the first great decisive triumph. Overtures of love and friendship were made from the other side. Would *Lady Anna* consent to become the *Countess Lovel*, all animosities might be buried, and everything be made pleasant, prosperous, noble, and triumphant!

It is easy to fill with air a half-inflated bladder. It is already so buoyant with its own lightness, that it yields itself with ease to receive the generous air. The imagination of the woman flew higher than ever it had flown when the proposition came home to her in all its bearings. Of course it had been in her mind that her daughter should marry well;—but there had been natural fears. Her child had not been educated, had not lived, had not been

surrounded in her young days, as are those girls from whom the curled darlings are wont to choose their wives. She would too probably be rough in manner, ungente in speech, ungifted in accomplishments, as compared with those who from their very cradles are encompassed by the blessings of wealth and high social standing. But when she looked at her child's beauty, she would hope. And then her child was soft, sweet-humoured, winning in all her little ways, pretty even in the poor duds which were supplied to her mainly by the generosity of the tailor. And so she would hope, and sometimes despair;—and then hope again. But she had never hoped for anything so good as this. Such a marriage would not only put her daughter as high as a Lovel ought to be, but would make it known in a remarkable manner to all coming ages that she, she herself, she the despised and slandered one,—who had been treated almost as woman had never been treated before,—was in very truth the Countess Lovel by whose income the family had been restored to its old splendour.

And so the longing grew upon her. Then, almost for the first time, did she begin to feel that it was necessary for the purposes of her life that the girl whom she loved so thoroughly, should be a creature in her hands, to be dealt with as she pleased. She

would have had her daughter accede to the proposed marriage even before she had seen Lord Lovel, and was petulant when her daughter would not be as clay in the sculptor's hand. But still the girl's refusal had been but as the refusal of a girl. She should not have been as are other girls. She should have known better. She should have understood what the peculiarity of her position demanded. But it had not been so with her. She had not soared as she should have done, above the love-laden dreams of common maidens. And so the visit to Yoxham was permitted. Then came the great blow,—struck as it were by a third hand, and that the hand of an attorney. The Countess Lovel learned through Mr. Goffe,—who had heard the tale from other lawyers,—that her daughter Lady Anna Lovel had, with her own mouth, told her noble lover that she was betrothed to a tailor! She felt at the moment that she could have died,—cursing her child for this black ingratitude.

But there might still be hope. The trial was going on,—or the work which was progressing towards the trial, and she was surrounded by those who could advise her. Doubtless what had happened was a great misfortune. But there was room for hope;—room for most assured hope. The Earl was not disposed to abandon the match, though he

had, of course, been greatly annoyed,—nay, disgusted and degraded by the girl's communication. But he had consented to see the matter in the proper light. The young tailor had got an influence over the girl when she was a child, was doubtless in pursuit of money, and must be paid. The folly of a child might be forgiven, and the Earl would persevere. No one would know what had occurred, and the thing would be forgotten as a freak of childhood. The Countess had succumbed to the policy of all this;—but she was not deceived by the benevolent falsehood. Lady Anna had been over twenty when she had been receiving lover's vows from this man, reeking from his tailor's board. And her girl, her daughter, had deceived her. That the girl had deceived her, saying there was no other lover, was much; but it was much more and worse and more damnable that there had been thorough deception as to the girl's own appreciation of her rank. The sympathy tendered through so many years must have been always pretended sympathy. With these feelings hot within her bosom, she could not bring herself to speak one kindly word to Lady Anna after the return from Yoxham. The girl was asked to abandon her odious lover with stern severity. It was demanded of her that she should do so with cruel threats. She

would never quite yield, though she had then no strength of purpose sufficient to enable her to declare that she would not yield. We know how she was banished to Bedford Square, and transferred from the ruthless persistency of her mother, to the less stern but not less fixed manœuvres of Mrs. Bluestone. At that moment of her existence she was herself in doubt. In Wyndham Street and at Yoxham she had almost more than doubted. The softness of the new Elysium had well nigh unnerved her. When that young man had caught her from stone to stone as she passed over the ford at Bolton, she was almost ready to give herself to him. But then had come upon her the sense of sickness, that faint, overdone flavour of sugared sweetness, which arises when sweet things become too luscious to the eater. She had struggled to be honest and strong, and had just not fallen into the pot of treacle.

But, notwithstanding all this, they who saw her and knew the story, were still sure that the lord must at last win the day. There was not one who believed that such a girl could be true to such a troth as she had made. Even the Solicitor-General, when he told the tale which the amorous steward had remembered to his own encouragement, did not think but what the girl and the girl's fortune would fall into the hands of his client. Human nature

demanded that it should be so. That it should be as he wished it was so absolutely consonant with all nature as he had known it, that he had preferred trusting to this result, in his client's behalf, to leaving the case in a jury's hands. At this moment he was sure he was right in his judgment. And indeed he was right ;—for no jury could have done anything for his client.

It went on till at last the wise men decided that the girl only wanted to be relieved by her old lover, that she might take a new lover with his permission. The girl was no doubt peculiar ; but, as far as the wise ones could learn from her manner,—for with words she would say nothing,—that was her state of mind. So the interview was planned,—to the infinite disgust of the Countess, who, however, believed that it might avail ; and we know what was the result. Lady Anna, who long had doubted,—who had at last almost begun to doubt whether Daniel Thwaite was true to her,—had renewed her pledges, strengthened her former promises, and was now more firmly betrothed than ever to him whom the Countess hated as a very fiend upon earth. But there certainly should be no marriage ! Though she pistoled the man at the altar, there should be no marriage.

And then there came upon her the infinite

disgust arising from the necessity of having to tell her sorrows to others,—who could not sympathize with her, though their wishes were as hers. It was hard upon her that no step could be taken by her in reference to her daughter without the knowledge of Mr. Goffe and Serjeant Bluestone,—and the consequent knowledge of Mr. Flick and the Solicitor-General. It was necessary, too, that Lord Lovel should know all. His conduct in many things must depend on the reception which might probably be accorded to a renewal of his suit. Of course he must be told. He had already been told that the tailor was to be admitted to see his love, in order that she might be absolved by the tailor from her first vow. It had not been pleasant,—but he had acceded. Mr. Flick had taken upon himself to say that he was sure that everything would be made pleasant. The Earl had frowned, and had been very short with Mr. Flick. These confidences with lawyers about his lovesuit, and his love's tone with her low-born lover, had not been pleasant to Lord Lovel. But he had endured it,—and now he must be told of the result. Oh, heavens ;—what a hell of misery was this girl making for her high-born relatives ! But the story of the tailor's visit to Keppel Street did not reach the unhappy ones at Yoxham till months had passed away.

Mr. Goffe was very injudicious in postponing the departure of the two ladies—as the Solicitor-General told Mr. Flick afterwards very plainly, when he heard of what had been done. “Money ; she might have had any money. I would have advanced it. You would have advanced it !” “Oh certainly,” said Mr. Flick, not, however, at all relishing the idea of advancing money to his client’s adversary. “I never heard of such folly,” continued Sir William. “That comes of trusting people who should not be trusted.” But it was too late then. Lady Anna was lying ill in bed, in fever ; and three doctors doubted whether she would ever get up again. “Would it not be better that she should die ?” said her mother to herself, standing over her and looking at her. It would,—so thought the mother then,—be better that she should die than get up to become the wife of Daniel Thwaite. But how much better that she should live and become the Countess Lovel ! She still loved her child, as only a mother can love her only child,—as only a mother can love who has no hope of joy in the world, but what is founded on her child. But the other passion had become so strong in her bosom that it almost conquered her mother’s yearnings. Was she to fight for long years that she might be beaten at last when the prize was so

near her,—when the cup was almost at her lips? Were the girl now to be taken to her grave, there would be an end at any rate of the fear which now most heavily oppressed her. But the three doctors were called in, one after another; and Lady Anna was tended as though her life was as precious as that of any other daughter.

These new tidings caused new perturbation among the lawyers. “They say that Clerke and Holland have given her over,” said Mr. Flick to Sir William.

“I am sorry to hear it,” said Mr. Solicitor; “but girls do live sometimes in spite of the doctors.”

“Yes; very true, Sir William; very true. But if it should go in that way it might not perhaps be amiss for our client.”

“God forbid that he should prosper by his cousin’s death, Mr. Flick. But the Countess would be the heir.”

“The Countess is devoted to the Earl. We ought to do something, Sir William. I don’t think that we could claim above eight or ten thousand pounds at most as real property. He put his money everywhere, did that old man. There are shares in iron mines in the Alleghanies, worth ever so much.”

“They are no good to us,” said the Solicitor-General, alluding to his client’s interests.

“Not worth a halfpenny to us, though they are paying twenty per cent. on the paid-up capital. He seems to have determined that the real heir should get nothing, even if there were no will. A wicked old man!”

“Very wicked, Mr. Flick.”

“A horrible old man! But we really ought to do something, Mr. Solicitor. If the girl won't marry him there should be some compromise, after all that we have done.”

“How can the girl marry any one, Mr. Flick,—if she's going to die?”

A few days after this, Sir William called in Keppel Street and saw the Countess, not with any idea of promoting a compromise,—for the doing which this would not have been the time, nor would he have been the fitting medium,—but in order that he might ask after Lady Anna's health. The whole matter was in truth now going very much against the Earl. Money had been allowed to the Countess and her daughter; and in truth all the money was now their own, to do with it as they listed, though there might be some delay before each was put into absolute possession of her own proportion; but no money had been allowed, or could be allowed, to the Earl. And, that the fact was so, was now becoming known to all men.

Hitherto credit had at any rate been easy with the young lord. When the old Earl died, and when the will was set aside, it was thought that he would be the heir. When the lawsuit first came up, it was believed everywhere that some generous compromise would be the worst that could befall him. After that the marriage had been almost a certainty, and then it was known that he had something of his own, so that tradesmen need not fear that their bills would be paid. It can hardly be said that he had been extravagant; but a lord must live, and an earl can hardly live and maintain a house in the country on a thousand a year, even though he has an uncle to keep his hunters for him. Some prudent men in London were already beginning to ask for their money, and the young Earl was in trouble. As Mr. Flick had said, it was quite time that something should be done. Sir William still depended on the panacea of a marriage, if only the girl would live. The marriage might be delayed; but, if the cards were played prudently, might still make everything comfortable. Such girls do not marry tailors, and will always prefer lords to tradesmen!

“I hope that you do not think that my calling is intrusive,” he said. The Countess, dressed all in black, with that funereal frown upon her brow which she always now wore, with deep-sunk eyes,

and care legible in every feature of her handsome face, received him with a courtesy that was as full of woe as it was graceful. She was very glad to make his acquaintance. There was no intrusion. He would forgive her, she thought, if he perceived that circumstances had almost overwhelmed her with sorrow. "I have come to ask after your daughter," said he.

"She has been very ill, Sir William."

"Is she better now?"

"I hardly know; I cannot say. They seemed to think this morning that the fever was less violent."

"Then she will recover, Lady Lovel."

"They do not say so. But indeed I did not ask them. It is all in God's hands. I sometimes think that it would be better that she should die, and there be an end of it."

This was the first time that these two had been in each other's company, and the lawyer could not altogether repress the feeling of horror with which he heard the mother speak in such a way of her only child. "Oh, Lady Lovel, do not say that!"

"But I do say it. Why should I not say it to you, who know all? Of what good will her life be to herself, or to any one else, if she pollute

herself and her family by this marriage? It would be better that she should be dead,—much better that she should be dead. She is all that I have, Sir William. It is for her sake that I have been struggling from the first moment in which I knew that I was to be a mother. The whole care of my life has been to prove her to be her father's daughter in the eye of the law. I doubt whether you can know what it is to pursue one object, and only one, through your whole life, with never-ending solicitude,—and to do it all on behalf of another. If you did, you would understand my feeling now. It would be better for her that she should die than become the wife of such a one as Daniel Thwaite."

"Lady Lovel, not only as a mother, but as a Christian, you should get the better of that feeling."

"Of course I should. No doubt every clergyman in England would tell me the same thing. It is easy to say all that, sir. Wait till you are tried. Wait till all your ambition is to be betrayed, every hope rolled in the dust, till all the honours you have won are to be soiled and degraded, till you are made a mark for general scorn and public pity,—and then tell me how you love the child by whom such evils are brought upon you!"

“I trust that I may never be so tried, Lady Lovel.”

“I hope not ; but think of all that before you preach to me. But I do love her ; and it is because I love her that I would fain see her removed from the reproaches which her own madness will bring upon her. Let her die ;—if it be God’s will. I can follow her without one wish for a prolonged life. Then will a noble family be again established, and her sorrowful tale will be told among the Lovels with a tear and without a curse.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LADY ANNA'S BEDSIDE.

ALL December went by, and the neighbours in the houses round spent each his merry Christmas; and the snow and frost of January passed over them, and February had come and nearly gone, before the doctors dared to say that Lady Anna Lovel's life was not still in danger. During this long period the world had known all about her illness,—as it did know, or pretended to know, the whole history of her life. The world had been informed that she was dying, and had, upon the whole, been really very sorry for her. She had interested the world, and the world had heard much of her youth and beauty,—of the romance too of her story, of her fidelity to the tailor, and of her persecutions. During these months of her illness the world was disposed to think that the tailor was a fine fellow, and that he ought to be taken by the hand. He had money now, and it was thought

that it would be a good thing to bring him into some club. There was a very strong feeling at the Beaufort that if he were properly proposed and seconded he would be elected,—not because he was going to marry an heiress, but because he was losing the heiress whom he was to have married. If the girl died, then Lord Lovel himself might bring him forward at the Beaufort. Of all this Daniel himself knew nothing; but he heard, as all the world heard, that Lady Anna was on her deathbed.

When the news first reached him,—after a fashion that seemed to him to be hardly worthy of credit,—he called at the house in Keppel Street and asked the question. Yes; Lady Anna was very ill; but, as it happened, Sarah the lady's-maid opened the door, and Sarah remembered the tailor. She had seen him when he was admitted to her young mistress, and knew enough of the story to be aware that he should be snubbed. Her first answer was given before she had bethought herself; then she snubbed him, and told no one but the Countess of his visit. After that Daniel went to one of the doctors, and waited at his door with patience till he could be seen. The unhappy man told his story plainly. He was Daniel Thwaite, late a tailor, the man from Keswick, to whom Lady Anna Lovel

was engaged. In charity and loving kindness, would the doctor tell him of the state of his beloved one? The doctor took him by the hand and asked him in, and did tell him. His beloved one was then on the very point of death. Whereupon Daniel wrote to the Countess in humble strains, himself taking the letter, and waiting without in the street for any answer that might be vouchsafed. If it was, as he was told, that his beloved was dying, might he be allowed to stand once at her bedside and kiss her hand? In about an hour an answer was brought to him at the area gate. It consisted of his own letter, opened, and returned to him without a word. He went away too sad to curse, but he declared to himself that such cruelty in a woman's bosom could exist only in the bosom of a countess.

But as others heard early in February that Lady Anna was like to recover, so did Daniel Thwaite. Indeed, his authority was better than that which reached the clubs, for the doctor still stood his friend. Could the doctor take a message from him to Lady Anna;—but one word? No;—the doctor could take no message. That he would not do. But he did not object to give to the lover a bulletin of the health of his sweetheart. In this way Daniel knew sooner than most others

when the change took place in the condition of his beloved one.

Lady Anna would be of age in May, and the plan of her betrothed was as follows. He would do nothing till that time, and then he would call upon her to allow their banns to be published in Bloomsbury Church after the manner of the Church of England. He himself had taken lodgings in Great Russell Street, thinking that his object might be aided by living in the same parish. If, as was probable, he would not be allowed to approach Lady Anna either in person, or by letter, then he would have recourse to the law, and would allege that the young lady was unduly kept a prisoner in custody. He was told that such complaint would be as idle wind, coming from him,—that no allegation of that kind could obtain any redress unless it came from the young lady herself; but he flattered himself that he could so make it that the young lady would at any rate obtain thereby the privilege of speaking for herself. Let some one ask her what were her wishes and he would be prepared to abide by her expression of them.

In the meantime Lord Lovel also had been anxious;—but his anxiety had been met in a very different fashion. For many days the Countess saw him daily, so that there grew up between them

a close intimacy. When it was believed that the girl would die,—believed with that sad assurance which made those who were concerned speak of her death almost as a certainty, the Countess, sitting alone with the young Earl, had told him that all would be his if the girl left them. He had muttered something as to there being no reason for that. “Who else should have it?” said the Countess. “Where should it go? Your people, Lovel, have not understood me. It is for the family that I have been fighting, fighting, fighting,—and never ceasing. Though you have been my adversary,—it has been all for the Lovels. If she goes,—it shall be yours at once. There is no one knows how little I care for wealth myself.” Then the girl had become better, and the Countess again began her plots, and her plans, and her strategy. She would take the girl abroad in May, in April if it might be possible. They would go,—not to Rome then, but to the south of France, and, as the weather became too warm for them, on to Switzerland and the Tyrol. Would he, Lord Lovel, follow them? Would he follow them and be constant in his suit, even though the frantic girl should still talk of her tailor lover? If he would do so, as far as money was concerned, all should be in common with them. For what was the money wanted but

that the Lovels might be great and noble and splendid? He said that he would do so. He also loved the girl,—thought at least during the tenderness created by her illness that he loved her with all his heart. He sat hour after hour with the Countess in Keppel Street,—sometimes seeing the girl as she lay unconscious, or feigning that she was so; till at last he was daily at her bedside. “You had better not talk to him, Anna,” her mother would say, “but of course he is anxious to see you.” Then the Earl would kiss her hand, and in her mother’s presence she had not the courage,—perhaps she had not the strength,—to withdraw it. In these days the Countess was not cruelly stern as she had been. Bedside nursing hardly admits of such cruelty of manner. But she never spoke to her child with little tender endearing words, never embraced her,—but was to her a careful nurse rather than a loving mother.

Then by degrees the girl got better, and was able to talk. “Mamma,” she said one day, “won’t you sit by me?”

“No, my dear; you should not be encouraged to talk.”

“Sit by me, and let me hold your hand.” For a moment the Countess gave way, and sat by her daughter, allowing her hand to remain pressed

beneath the bedclothes;—but she rose abruptly, remembering her grievance, remembering that it would be better that her child should die, should die broken-hearted by unrelenting cruelty, than be encouraged to think it possible that she should do as she desired. So she rose abruptly and left the bedside without a word.

“Mamma,” said Lady Anna; “will Lord Level be here to-day?”

“I suppose he will be here.”

“Will you let me speak to him for a minute?”

“Surely you may speak to him.”

“I am strong now, mamma, and I think that I shall be well again some day. I have so often wished that I might die.”

“You had better not talk about it, my dear.”

“But I should like to speak to him, mamma, without you.”

“What to say,—Anna?”

“I hardly know;—but I should like to speak to him. I have something to say about money.”

“Cannot I say it?”

“No, mamma. I must say it myself,—if you will let me.” The Countess looked at her girl with suspicion, but she gave the permission demanded. Of course it would be right that this lover should see his love. The Countess was almost

mind to require from Lady Anna an assurance that no allusion should be made to Daniel Thwaite; but the man's name had not been mentioned between them since the beginning of the illness, and she was loth to mention it now. Nor would it have been possible to prevent for long such an interview as that now proposed.

"He shall come in if he pleases," said the Countess; "but I hope you will remember who you are and to whom you are speaking."

"I will remember both, mamma," said Lady Anna. The Countess looked down on her daughter's face, and could not help thinking that her child was different from what she had been. There had been almost defiance in the words spoken, though they had been spoken with the voice of an invalid.

At three o'clock that afternoon, according to his custom, Lord Lovel came, and was at once told that he was to be spoken to by his cousin. "She says it is about money," said the Countess.

"About money?"

"Yes;—and if she confines herself to that, do as she bids you. If she is ever to be your wife it will be all right; and if not,—then it will be better in your hands than in hers. In three months time she can do as she pleases with it all." He was

then taken into Lady Anna's room. "Here is your cousin," said the Countess. "You must not talk long or I shall interrupt you. If you wish to speak to him about the property,—as the head of your family,—that will be very right; but confine yourself to that for the present." Then the Countess left them and closed the door.

"It is not only about money, Lord Lovel."

"You might call me Frederic now," said he tenderly.

"No;—not now. If I am ever well again and we are then friends I will do so. They tell me that there is ever so much money,—hundreds of thousands of pounds. I forget how much."

"Do not trouble yourself about that."

"But I do trouble myself very much about it,—and I know that it ought to be yours. There is one thing I want to tell you, which you must believe. If I am ever any man's wife, I shall be the wife of Daniel Thwaite." That dark frown came upon his face which she had seen once before. "Pray believe that it is so," she continued. "Mamma does not believe it,—will not believe it; but it is so. I love him with all my heart. I think of him every minute. It is very very cruel that I may not hear from him or send one word to tell him how I am. There! My hand is on the Bible, and I swear to

you that if I am ever the wife of any man, I will be his wife."

He looked down at her and saw that she was wan and thin and weak, and he did not dare to preach to her the old family sermon as to his rank and station. "But, Anna, why do you tell me this now?" he said.

"That you may believe it and not trouble yourself with me any more. You must believe it when I tell you so in this manner. I may perhaps never live to rise from my bed. If I get well, I shall send to him, or go. I will not be hindered. He is true to me, and I will be true to him. You may tell mamma if you think proper. She would not believe me, but perhaps she may believe you. But, Lord Lovel, it is not fit that he should have all this money. He does not want it, and he would not take it. Till I am married I may do what I please with it;—and it shall be yours."

"That cannot be."

"Yes, it can. I know that I can make it yours if I please. They tell me that—that you are not rich, as Lord Lovel should be, because all this has been taken from you. That was the reason why you came to me."

"By heaven, Anna, I love you most truly."

"It could not have been so when you had not

seen me. Will you take a message from me to Daniel Thwaite?"

He thought awhile before he answered it. "No, I cannot do that."

"Then I must find another messenger. Mr. Goffe will do it perhaps. He shall tell me how much he wants to keep, and the rest shall be yours. That is all. If you tell mamma, ask her not to be hard to me." He stood over her and took her hand, but knew not how to speak a word to her. He attempted to kiss her hand; but she raised herself on her elbow, and shook her head and drew it from him. "It belongs to Daniel Thwaite," she said. Then he left her and did not speak another word.

"What has she said?" asked the Countess, with an attempt at smiling.

"I do not know that I should tell you."

"Surely, Lovel, you are bound to tell me."

"She has offered me all her property,—or most of it."

"She is right," said the Countess.

"But she has sworn to me, on the Bible, that she will never be my wife."

"Tush!—it means nothing."

"Ah yes;—it means much. It means all. She never loved me,—not for an instant. That other

man has been before me, and she is too firm to be moved."

"Did she say so?"

He was silent for a moment and then replied, "Yes; she did say so."

"Then let her die!" said the Countess.

"Lady Lovel!"

"Let her die. It will be better. Oh, God! that I should be brought to this. And what will you do, my lord? Do you mean to say that you will abandon her?"

"I cannot ask her to be my wife again."

"What;—because she has said this in her sickness,—when she is half delirious,—while she is dreaming of the words that man spoke to her? Have you no more strength than that? Are you so poor a creature?"

"I think I have been a poor creature to ask her a second time at all."

"No; not so. Your duty and mine are the same,—as should be hers. We must forget ourselves while we save the family. Do not I bear all? Have not I borne everything—contumely, solitude, ill words, poverty, and now this girl's unkindness? But even yet I will not give it up. Take the property,—as it is offered."

"I could not touch it."

“If not for you, then for your children. Take it all, so that we may be the stronger. But do not abandon us now, if you are a man.”

He would not stay to hear her further exhortations, but hurried away from the house full of doubt and unhappiness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LADY ANNA'S OFFER.

EARLY in March Lady Anna was convalescent, but had not yet left the house in Keppel Street,—and the confusion and dismay of the Countess were greater than ever. Lady Anna had declared that she would not leave England for the present. She was reminded that at any rate till the 10th of May she was subject to her mother's control. But by this time her mother's harshness to her had produced some corresponding hardness in her. "Yes, mamma;—but I will not go abroad. Things must be settled, and I am not well enough to go yet." The Countess asserted that everything could be arranged abroad, that papers could be sent after them, that Mr. Goffe could come out to them; and with much show of authority persisted. She would do anything by which she might be able to remove Lady Anna from the influence of Daniel Thwaite at the time at which the girl would cease to be subject

to her. But in truth the girl had ceased to be subject to her. "No, mamma, I will not go. If you will ask Serjeant Bluestone, or Sir William Patterson, I am sure they will say that I ought not to be made to go." There were some terrible scenes in which the mother was driven almost to desperation. Lady Anna repeated to the Countess all that she had said to Lord Lovel,—and swore to her mother with the Bible in hand that if ever she became the wife of any man she would be the wife of Daniel Thwaite. Then the Countess with great violence knocked the book out of her daughter's grasp, and it was thrown to the other side of the room. "If this is to go on," said the Countess, "one of us must die."

"Mamma, I have done nothing to make you so unkind to me. You have not spoken one word of kindness to me since I came from Yoxham."

"If this goes on I shall never speak a word of kindness to you again," said the mother.

But in the midst of all this there was one point on which they were agreed,—on which they came sufficiently near together for action, though there was still a wide difference between them. Some large proportion of the property at stake was to be made over to Lord Lovel on the day that gave the girl the legal power of transferring her own posses-

sions. The Countess began by presuming that the whole of Lady Anna's wealth was to be so transferred,—not from any lack of reverence for the great amount which was in question, but feeling that for all good purposes it would be safer in the hands of the Earl than in those of her own child. If it could be arranged that the tailor could get nothing with his bride, then it might still be possible that the tailor might refuse the match. At any rate a quarrel might be fostered and the evil might be staved off. But to this Lady Anna would not assent. If she might act in this business in concert with Mr. Thwaite she would be able, she thought, to do better by her cousin than she proposed. But as she was not allowed to learn what were Mr. Thwaite's wishes, she would halve her property with her cousin. As much as this she was willing to do,—and was determined to do, acting on her own judgment. More she would not do,—unless she could see Mr. Thwaite. As it stood, her proposition was one which would, if carried out, bestow something like £10,000 a year upon the Earl. Then Mr. Goffe was sent for, and Lady Anna was allowed to communicate her suggestion to the lawyer. "That should require a great deal of thought," said Mr. Goffe with solemnity. Lady Anna declared that she had been thinking of it all

the time she had been ill. "But it should not be done in a hurry," said Mr. Goffe. Then Lady Anna remarked that in the meantime, her cousin, the Earl, the head of her family, would have nothing to support his title. Mr. Goffe took his leave, promising to consult his partner, and to see Mr. Flick.

Mr. Goffe did consult his partner and did see Mr. Flick, and then Serjeant Bluestone was asked his advice,—and the Solicitor-General. The Serjeant had become somewhat tired of the Lovels, and did not care to give any strong advice either in one direction or in the other. The young lady, he said, might of course do what she liked with her own when it was her own; but he thought that she should not be hurried. He pointed it out as a fact that the Earl had not the slightest claim upon any portion of the estate,—not more than he would have had if this money had come to Lady Anna from her mother's instead of or from her father's relatives. He was still of opinion that the two cousins might ultimately become man and wife if matters were left tranquil and the girl were taken abroad for a year or two. Lady Anna, however, would be of age in a few weeks, and must of course do as she liked with her own.

But they all felt that everything would at last be ruled by what the Solicitor-General might say.

The Solicitor-General was going out of town for a week or ten days,—having the management of a great case at the Spring Assizes. He would think over Lady Anna's proposition, and say what he had to say when he returned. Lord Lovel, however, had been his client, and he had said from first to last that more was to be done for his client by amicable arrangement than by hostile opposition. If the Earl could get £10,000 a year by amicable arrangement, the Solicitor-General would be shown to have been right in the eyes of all men, and it was not probable,—as both Mr. Goffe and Mr. Flick felt,—that he would not repudiate a settlement of the family affairs by which he would be proved to have been a discreet counsellor.

In the meantime it behoved Lord Lovel himself to have an opinion. Mr. Flick of course had told him of the offer,—which had in truth been made directly to himself by his cousin. At this time his affairs were not in a happy condition. A young earl, handsome and well esteemed, may generally marry an heiress,—if not one heiress then another. Though he be himself a poor man, his rank and position will stand in lieu of wealth. And so would it have been with this young earl,—who was very handsome and excellently well esteemed,—had it not been that all the world knew that it was his

especial business to marry one especial heiress. He could hardly go about looking for other honey, having, as he had, one particular hive devoted by public opinion to himself. After a year or two he might have looked elsewhere,—but what was he to do in the meantime? He was well nigh penniless, and in debt. So he wrote a letter to his uncle, the parson.

It may be remembered that when the uncle and nephew last parted in London there was not much love between them. From that day to this they had not seen each other, nor had there been any communication between them. The horses had been taken away and sold. The rector had spoken to the ladies of his household more than once with great bitterness of the young man's ingratitude; and they more than once had spoken to the rector, with a woman's piteous tenderness, of the young lord's poverty. But it was all sorrow and distress. For in truth the rector could not be happy while he was on bad terms with the head of his family. Then the young lord wrote as though there had been nothing amiss between them. It had in truth all passed away from his mind. This very liberal offer had been made to him. It amounted to wealth in lieu of poverty,—to what would be comfortable wealth even for an earl. Ten thousand a year was

offered to him by his cousin. Might he accept it? The rector took the letter in good part, and begged his nephew to come at once to Yoxham. Whereupon the nephew went to Yoxham.

“What does Sir William say?” asked the rector, who, in spite of his disapproval of all that Sir William had done, felt that the Solicitor-General was the man whose influence in the matter would really prevail.

“He has said nothing as yet. He is out of town.”

“Ten thousand a year! Who was it made the offer?”

“She made it herself.”

“Lady Anna?”

“Yes;—Lady Anna. It is a noble offer.”

“Yes, indeed. But then if she has no right to any of it, what does it amount to?”

“But she has a right to all of it;—she and her mother between them.”

“I shall never believe it, Frederic—never; and not the less so because they now want to bind you to them by such a compromise as this.”

“I think you look at it in a wrong light, uncle Charles.”

“Well;—well. I will say nothing more about it. I don't see why you shouldn't take it,—I don't

indeed. It ought all to have been yours. Everybody says that. You'll have to buy land, and it won't give you nearly so much then. I hope you'll buy land all the same, and I do hope it will be properly settled when you marry. As to marrying, you will be able to do much better than what you used to think of."

"We won't talk about that, uncle Charles," said the Earl.

As far as the rector's opinion went, it was clear that the offer might be accepted; but yet it was felt that very much must depend on what the Solicitor-General might say. Then Miss Lovel gave her opinion on the matter, which did not altogether agree with that of her brother. She believed in Lady Anna, whereas the rector professed that he did not. The rector and Lady Fitzwarren were perhaps the only two persons who, after all that had been said and done, still maintained that the Countess was an impostor, and that Lady Anna would only be Anna Murray, if everybody had his due. Miss Lovel was quite as anxious on behalf of the Earl as was her brother, but she clung to the hope of a marriage. "I still think it might all come right, if you would only wait," said aunt Julia.

"It's all very well talking of waiting, but how am I to live?"

"You could live here, Frederic. There is nothing my brother would like so much. I thought he would break his heart when the horses were taken away. It would only be for a year."

"What would come of it?"

"At the end of the year she would be your wife."

"Never!" said the Earl.

"Young men are so impatient."

"Never, under any circumstances, would I ask her again. You may make your mind up to that. As sure as you stand there, she will marry Daniel Thwaite, if she lives another twelvemonth."

"You really think so, Frederic?"

"I am sure of it. After what she said to me, it would be impossible I should doubt it."

"And she will be Lady Anna Thwaite! Oh dear, how horrible. I wish she had died when she was ill;—I do indeed. A journeyman tailor! But something will prevent it. I really think that Providence will interfere to prevent it!" But in reference to the money she gave in her adhesion. If the great lawyer said that it might be taken,—then it should be taken. At the end of a week the Earl hurried back to London to see the great lawyer.

CHAPTER XL.

NO DISGRACE AT ALL.

BEFORE the Solicitor-General returned to town things had come to a worse pass than ever. Lady Lovel had ordered her daughter to be ready to start to Paris by a certain hour, on a certain day,—giving her three days for preparation,—and Lady Anna had refused to go. Whereupon the Countess had caused her own things to be packed up, and those of her daughter. Sarah was now altogether in the confidence of the Countess, so that Lady Anna had not even dominion over her own clothes. The things were stowed away, and all the arrangements were made for the journey; but Lady Anna refused to go, and when the hour came could not be induced to get into the carriage. The lodgings had been paid for to the day, and given up; so that the poor old woman in Keppel Street was beside herself. Then the Countess, of necessity, postponed her journey for twenty-four hours, telling her daughter

that on the next day she would procure the assistance of magistrates and force the rebel to obedience.

Hardly a word had been spoken between the mother and daughter during those three days. There had been messages sent backwards and forwards, and once or twice the Countess had violently entered Lady Anna's bedroom, demanding submission. Lady Anna was always on the bed when her mother entered, and, there lying, would shake her head, and then with sobs accuse the Countess of unkindness. Lady Lovel had become furious in her wrath, hardly knowing what she herself did or said, always asserting her own authority, declaring her own power, and exclaiming against the wicked ingratitude of her child. This she did till the young waiting-woman was so frightened that she was almost determined to leave the house abruptly, though keenly alive to the profit and glory of serving a violent and rich countess. And the old lady who let the lodgings was intensely anxious to be rid of her lodgers, though her money was scrupulously paid, and no questions asked as to extra charges. Lady Anna was silent and sullen. When left to herself she spent her time at her writing-desk, of which she had managed to keep the key. What meals she took were brought up

to her bedroom, so that a household more uncomfortable could hardly be gathered under a roof.

On the day fixed for that departure which did not take place, the Countess wrote to Mr. Goffe for assistance,—and Lady Anna, by the aid of the mistress of the house, wrote to Serjeant Bluestone. The letter to Mr. Goffe was the first step taken towards obtaining that assistance from civil authorities to which the Countess thought herself to be entitled in order that her legal dominion over her daughter might be enforced. Lady Anna wrote to the Serjeant, simply begging that he would come to see her, putting her letter open into the hands of the landlady. She implored him to come at once,—and, as it happened, he called in Keppel Street that night, whereas Mr. Goffe's visit was not made till the next morning. He asked for the Countess, and was shown into the drawing-room. The whole truth was soon made clear to him, for the Countess attempted to conceal nothing. Her child was rebelling against authority, and she was sure that the Serjeant would assist her in putting down and conquering such pernicious obstinacy. But she found at once that the Serjeant would not help her. "But Lady Anna will be herself of age in a day or two," he said.

“Not for nearly two months,” said the Countess indignantly.

“My dear Lady Lovel, under such circumstances you can hardly put constraint upon her.”

“Why not? She is of age, or she is not. Till she be of age she is bound to obey me.”

“True;—she is bound to obey you after a fashion, and so indeed she would be had she been of age a month since. But such obligations here in England go for very little, unless they are supported by reason.”

“The law is the law.”

“Yes;—but the law would be all in her favour before you could get it to assist you,—even if you could get its assistance. In her peculiar position, it is rational that she should choose to wait till she be able to act for herself. Very great interests will be at her disposal, and she will of course wish to be near those who can advise her.”

“I am her only guardian. I can advise her.” The Serjeant shook his head. “You will not help me then?”

“I fear I cannot help you, Lady Lovel.”

“Not though you know the reasons which induce me to take her away from England before she slips entirely out of my hands and ruins all our hopes?” But still the Serjeant shook his head. “Every one

is leagued against me," said the Countess, throwing up her hands in despair.

Then the Serjeant asked permission to visit Lady Anna, but was told that he could not be allowed to do so. She was in bed, and there was nothing to make it necessary that she should receive a visit from a gentleman in her bedroom. "I am an old man," said the Serjeant, "and have endeavoured to be a true and honest friend to the young lady. I think, Lady Lovel, that you will do wrong to refuse my request. I tell you fairly that I shall be bound to interfere on her behalf. She has applied to me as her friend, and I feel myself constrained to attend to her application."

"She has applied to you?"

"Yes, Lady Lovel. There is her letter."

"She has deceived me again," said the Countess, tearing the letter into atoms. But the Serjeant so far frightened her that she was induced to promise that Mrs. Bluestone should see Lady Anna on the following morning,—stipulating, however, that Mrs. Bluestone should see herself before she went up-stairs.

On the following morning Mr. Goffe came early. But Mr. Goffe could give his client very little comfort. He was, however, less uncomfortable than the Serjeant had been. He was of opinion that Lady Anna certainly ought to go abroad, in

obedience to her mother's instructions, and was willing to go to her and tell her so, with what solemnity of legal authority he might be able to assume; but he could not say that anything could be done absolutely to enforce obedience. Mr. Goffe suggested that perhaps a few gentle words might be successful. "Gentle words!" said the Countess, who had become quite unable to restrain herself. "The harshest words are only too gentle for her. If I had known what she was, Mr. Goffe, I would never have stirred in this business. They might have called me what they would, and it would have been better." When Mr. Goffe came downstairs he had not a word to say more as to the efficacy of gentleness. He simply remarked that he did not think the young lady could be induced to go, and suggested that everybody had better wait till the Solicitor-General returned to town.

Then Mrs. Bluestone came, almost on the heels of the attorney;—poor Mrs. Bluestone, who now felt that it was a dreadful grievance both to her and to her husband that they had had anything to do with the Lovel family! She was very formal in her manner,—and, to tell the truth for her, rather frightened. The Serjeant had asked her to call and see Lady Anna Lovel. Might she be permitted to do so? Then the Countess burst

forth with a long story of all her wrongs,—with the history of her whole life. Not beginning with her marriage,—but working back to it from the intense misery, and equally intense ambition of the present hour. She told it all; how everybody had been against her,—how she had been all alone at the dreary Grange in Westmoreland,—how she had been betrayed by her husband, and turned out to poverty and scorn;—how she had borne it all for the sake of the one child who was, by God's laws and man's, the heiress to her father's name; how she had persevered,—intermingling it all with a certain worship of high honours and hereditary position with which Mrs. Bluestone was able in some degree to sympathise. She was clever, and words came to her freely. It was almost impossible that any hearer should refuse to sympathise with her,—any hearer who knew that her words were true. And all that she told was true. The things which she narrated had been done;—the wrongs had been endured;—and the end of it all which she feared, was imminent. And the hearer thought as did the speaker as to the baseness of this marriage with the tailor,—thought as did the speaker of the excellence of the marriage with the lord. But still there was something in the woman's eye,—something in the tone of her voice, something in

the very motion of her hands as she told her story, which made Mrs. Bluestone feel that Lady Anna should not be left under her mother's control. It would be very well that the Lovel family should be supported, and that Lady Anna should be kept within the pale of her own rank. But there might be things worse than Lady Anna's defection,—and worse even than the very downfall of the Lovels.

After sitting for nearly two hours with the Countess, Mrs. Bluestone was taken up-stairs. "Mrs. Bluestone has come to see you," said the Countess, not entering the room, and retreating again immediately as she closed the door.

"This is very kind of you, Mrs. Bluestone," said Lady Anna, who was sitting crouching in her dressing-gown over the fire. "But I thought that perhaps the Serjeant would come." The lady, taken off her guard, immediately said that the Serjeant had been there on the preceding evening. "And mamma would not let me see him! But you will help me!"

"In this interview, as in that below, a long history was told to the visitor, and was told with an eloquent energy which she certainly had not expected. "They talk to me of ladies," said Lady Anna. "I was not a lady. I knew nothing of ladies and their doings. I was a poor girl, friendless

but for my mother, sometimes almost without shoes to my feet, often ragged, solitary, knowing nothing of ladies. Then there came one lad, who played with me;—and it was mamma who brought us together. He was good to me, when all others were bad. He played with me, and gave me things, and taught me,—and loved me. Then when he asked me to love him again, and to love him always, was I to think that I could not,—because I was a lady! You despise him because he is a tailor. A tailor was good to me, when no one else was good. How could I despise him because he was a tailor? I did not despise him, but I loved him with all my heart.”

“But when you came to know who you were, Lady Anna——”

“Yes;—yes. I came to know who I was, and they brought my cousin to me, and told me to love him, and bade me be a lady indeed. I felt it too, for a time. I thought it would be pleasant to be a Countess, and to go among great people; and he was pleasant, and I thought that I could love him too, and do as they bade me. But when I thought of it much,—when I thought of it alone,—I hated myself. In my heart of hearts I loved him who had always been my friend. And when Lord Lovel came to me at Bolton, and said that I must

give my answer then,—I told him all the truth. I am glad I told him the truth. He should not have come again after that. If Daniel is so poor a creature because he is a tailor,—must not I be poor who love him? And what must he be when he comes to me again after that?”

When Mrs. Bluestone descended from the room she was quite sure that the girl would become Lady Anna Thwaite, and told the Countess that such was her opinion. “By the God above me,” said the Countess rising from her chair;—“by the God above me, she never shall.” But after that the Countess gave up her project of forcing her daughter to go abroad. The old lady of the house was told that the rooms would still be required for some weeks to come,—perhaps for months; and having had a conference on the subject with Mrs. Bluestone, did not refuse her consent.

At last Sir William returned to town, and was besieged on all sides, as though in his hands lay the power of deciding what should become of all the Lovel family. Mr. Goffe was as confidential with him as Mr. Flick, and even Serjeant Bluestone condescended to appeal to him. The young Earl was closeted with him on the day of his return, and he had found on his desk the following note from the Countess;—

“The Countess Lovel presents her compliments to the Solicitor-General. The Countess is very anxious to leave England with her daughter, but has hitherto been prevented by her child’s obstinacy. Sir William Patterson is so well aware of all the circumstances that he no doubt can give the Countess advice as to the manner in which she should proceed to enforce the obedience of her daughter. The Countess Lovel would feel herself unwarranted in thus trespassing on the Solicitor-General, were it not that it is her chief anxiety to do everything for the good of Earl Lovel and the family.”

“Look at that, my lord,” said the Solicitor-General, showing the Earl the letter. “I can do nothing for her.”

“What does she want to have done?”

“She wants to carry her daughter away beyond the reach of Mr. Thwaite. I am not a bit surprised; but she can’t do it. The days are gone by when a mother could lock her daughter up, or carry her away,—at any rate in this country.”

“It is very sad.”

“It might have been much worse. Why should she not marry Mr. Thwaite? Let them make the settlement as they propose, and then let the young lady have her way. She will have her way,—whether her mother lets her or no.”

“It will be a disgrace to the family, Sir William.”

“No disgrace at all! How many peers’ daughters marry commoners in England. It is not with us as it is with some German countries in which noble blood is separated as by a barrier from blood that is not noble. The man I am told is clever and honest. He will have great means at his command, and I do not see why he should not make as good a gentleman as the best of us. At any rate she must not be persecuted.”

Sir William answered the Countess’s letter as a matter of course, but there was no comfort in his answer. “The Solicitor-General presents his compliments to the Countess Lovel. With all the will in the world to be of service, he fears that he can do no good by interfering between the Countess and Lady Anna Lovel. If, however, he may venture to give advice, he would suggest to the Countess that as Lady Anna will be of age in a short time, no attempt should now be made to exercise a control which must cease when that time shall arrive.” “They are all joined against me,” said the Countess, when she read the letter;—“every one of them! But still it shall never be. I will not live to see it.”

Then there was a meeting between Mr. Flick and Sir William. Mr. Flick must inform the ladies

that nothing could be done till Lady Anna was of age;—that not even could any instructions be taken from her before that time as to what should subsequently be done. If, when that time came, she should still be of a mind to share with her cousin the property, she could then instruct Mr. Goffe to make out the necessary deeds.

All this was communicated by letter to the Countess, but Mr. Goffe especially requested that the letter might be shown to Lady Anna, and that he might receive a reply intimating that Lady Anna understood its purport. If necessary he would call upon Lady Anna in Keppel Street. After some delay and much consideration, the Countess sent the attorney's letter to her daughter, and Lady Anna herself wrote a reply. She perfectly understood the purport of Mr. Goffe's letter, and would thank Mr. Goffe to call upon her on the 10th of May, when the matter might, she hoped, be settled.

CHAPTER XLI.

NEARER AND NEARER.

So they went on living in utter misery till the month of May had come round, and Lady Anna was at last pronounced to be convalescent.

Late one night, long after midnight, the Countess crept into her daughter's room and sat down by the bedside. Lady Anna was asleep, and the Countess sat there and watched. At this time the girl had passed her birthday, and was of age. Mr. Goffe had been closeted with her and with her mother for two mornings running, Sir William Patterson had also been with them, and instructions had been given as to the property, upon which action was to be at once taken. Of that proportion of the estate which fell to Lady Anna, one entire moiety was to be made over to the Earl. While this was being arranged no word was said as to Daniel Thwaite, or as to the marriage with the lord. The settlement was made as though it were a thing of itself; and

they all had been much surprised,—the mother, the Solicitor-General, and the attorney,—at the determination of purpose and full comprehension of the whole affair which Lady Anna displayed. When it came to the absolute doing of the matter,—the abandonment of all this money,—the Countess became uneasy and discontented. She also had wished that Lord Lovel should have the property,—but her wish had been founded on a certain object to be attained, which object was now farther from her than ever. But the property in question was not hers, but her daughter's, and she made no loud objection to the proceeding. The instructions were given, and the deeds were to be forthcoming some time before the end of the month.

It was on the night of the 11th of May that the Countess sat at her child's bedside. She had brought up a taper with her, and there she sat watching the sleeping girl. Thoughts wondrously at variance with each other, and feelings thoroughly antagonistic, ran through her brain and heart. This was her only child,—the one thing that there was for her to love,—the only tie to the world that she possessed. But for her girl, it would be good that she should be dead. And if her girl should do this thing, which would make her life a burden to her,—how good it would be for her to

die! She did not fear to die, and she feared nothing after death;—but with a coward's dread she did fear the torment of her failure if this girl should become the wife of Daniel Thwaite. In such case most certainly would she never see the girl again,—and life then would be all a blank to her. But she understood that though she should separate herself from the world altogether, men would know of her failure, and would know that she was devouring her own heart in the depth of her misery. If the girl would but have done as her mother had proposed, would have followed after her kind, and taken herself to those pleasant paths which had been opened for her, with what a fond caressing worship, with what infinite kisses and blessings, would she, the mother, have tended the young Countess and assisted in making the world bright for the high-born bride. But a tailor! Foh! What a degraded creature was her child to cling to so base a love!

She did, however, acknowledge to herself that the girl's clinging was of a kind she had no power to lessen. The ivy to its standard tree is not more loyal than was her daughter to this wretched man. But the girl might die,—or the tailor might die,—or she, the miserable mother, might die; and so this misery might be at an end. Nothing but death

could end it. Thoughts and dreams of other violence had crossed her brain,—of carrying the girl away, of secluding her, of frightening her from day to day into some childish, half-idiotic submission. But for that the tame obedience of the girl would have been necessary,—or that external assistance which she had sought, in vain, to obtain among the lawyers. Such hopes were now gone, and nothing remained but death.

Why had not the girl gone when she was so like to go? Why had she not died when it had seemed to be God's pleasure to take her? A little indifference, some slight absence of careful tending, any chance accident would have made that natural which was now,—which was now so desirable and yet beyond reach! Yes;—so desirable! For whose sake could it be wished that a life so degraded should be prolonged? But there could be no such escape. With her eyes fixed on vacancy, revolving it in her mind, she thought that she could kill herself;—but she knew that she could not kill her child.

But, should she destroy herself, there would be no vengeance in that. Could she be alone, far out at sea, in some small skiff with that low-born tailor, and then pull out the plug, and let him know what he had done to her as they both went down together beneath the water, that would be such a cure of the

evil as would now best suit her wishes. But there was no such sea, and no such boat. Death, however, might still be within her grasp.

Then she laid her hand on the girl's shoulder, and Lady Anna awoke. "Oh, mamma;—is that you?"

"It is I, my child."

"Mamma, mamma; is anything the matter? Oh, mamma, kiss me." Then the Countess stooped down and kissed the girl passionately. "Dear mamma,—dearest mamma!"

"Anna, will you do one thing for me? If I never speak to you of Lord Lovel again, will you forget Daniel Thwaite?" She paused, but Lady Anna had no answer ready. "Will you not say as much as that for me? Say that you will forget him till I am gone."

"Gone, mamma? You are not going!"

"Till I am dead. I shall not live long, Anna. Say at least that you will not see him or mention his name for twelve months. Surely, Anna, you will do as much as that for a mother who has done so much for you." But Lady Anna would make no promise. She turned her face to the pillow and was dumb. "Answer me, my child. I may at least demand an answer."

"I will answer you to-morrow, mamma." Then

the Countess fell on her knees at the bedside and uttered a long, incoherent prayer, addressed partly to the God of heaven, and partly to the poor girl who was lying there in bed, supplicating with mad, passionate eagerness that this evil thing might be turned away from her. Then she seized the girl in her embrace and nearly smothered her with kisses. "My own, my darling, my beauty, my all; save your mother from worse than death, if you can;—if you can!"

Had such tenderness come sooner it might have had deeper effect. As it was, though the daughter was affected and harassed,—though she was left panting with sobs and drowned in tears,—she could not but remember the treatment she had suffered from her mother during the last six months. Had the request for a year's delay come sooner, it would have been granted; but now it was made after all measures of cruelty had failed. Ten times during the night did she say that she would yield,—and ten times again did she tell herself that were she to yield now, she would be a slave all her life. She had resolved,—whether right or wrong,—still, with a strong mind and a great purpose, that she would not be turned from her way, and when she arose in the morning she was resolved again. She went into her mother's room and at once declared her purpose.

“Mamma, it cannot be. I am his, and I must not forget him or be ashamed of his name ;—no, not for a day.”

“Then go from me, thou ungrateful one, hard of heart, unnatural child, base, cruel, and polluted. Go from me, if it be possible, for ever !”

Then did they live for some days separated for a second time, each taking her meals in her own room ; and Mrs. Richards, the owner of the lodgings, went again to Mrs. Bluestone, declaring that she was afraid of what might happen, and that she must pray to be relieved from the presence of the ladies. Mrs. Bluestone had to explain that the lodgings had been taken for the quarter, and that a mother and daughter could not be put out into the street merely because they lived on bad terms with each other. The old woman, as was natural, increased her bills ;—but that had no effect.

On the 15th of May Lady Anna wrote a note to Daniel Thwaite, and sent a copy of it to her mother before she had posted it. It was in two lines ;—

“DEAR DANIEL,

“Pray come and see me here. If you get this soon enough, pray come on Tuesday about one.

“Yours affectionately,

“ANNA.”

“Tell mamma,” said she to Sarah, “that I intend to go out and put that in the post to-day.” The letter was addressed to Wyndham Street. Now the Countess knew that Daniel Thwaite had left Wyndham Street.

“Tell her,” said the Countess, “tell her——; but, of what use to tell her anything? Let the door be closed upon her. She shall never return to me any more.” The message was given to Lady Anna as she went forth:—but she posted the letter, and then called in Bedford Square. Mrs. Bluestone returned with her to Keppel Street; but as the door was opened by Mrs. Richards, and as no difficulty was made as to Lady Anna’s entrance, Mrs. Bluestone returned home without asking to see the Countess.

This happened on a Saturday, but when Tuesday came Daniel Thwaite did not come to Keppel Street. The note was delivered in course of post at his old abode, and was redirected from Wyndham Street late on Monday evening,—having no doubt given cause there for much curiosity and inspection. Late on the Tuesday it did reach Daniel Thwaite’s residence in Great Russell Street, but he was then out, wandering about the streets as was his wont, telling himself of all the horrors of an idle life, and thinking what steps he should take next as to the gaining of his bride. He had known to a day

when she was of age, and had determined that he would allow her one month from thence before he would call upon her to say what should be their mutual fate. She had reached that age but a few days, and now she had written to him herself.

On returning home he received the girl's letter, and when the early morning had come,—the Wednesday morning, the day after that fixed by Lady Anna,—he made up his mind as to his course of action. He breakfasted at eight, knowing how useless it would be to stir early, and then called in Keppel Street, leaving word with Mrs. Richards herself that he would be there again at one o'clock to see Lady Anna. "You can tell Lady Anna that I only got her note last night very late." Then he went off to the hotel in Albemarle Street at which he knew that Lord Lovel was living. It was something after nine when he reached the house, and the Earl was not yet out of his bedroom. Daniel, however, sent up his name, and the Earl begged that he would go into the sitting-room and wait. "Tell Mr. Thwaite that I will not keep him above a quarter of an hour." Then the tailor was shown into the room where the breakfast things were laid, and there he waited.

Within the last few weeks very much had been said to the Earl about Daniel Thwaite by many

people, and especially by the Solicitor-General. "You may be sure that she will become his wife," Sir William had said, "and I would advise you to accept him as her husband. She is not a girl such as we at first conceived her to be. She is firm of purpose, and very honest. Obstinate, if you will, and,—if you will,—obstinate to a bad end. But she is generous, and let her marry whom she will, you cannot cast her out. You will owe everything to her high sense of honour;—and I am much mistaken if you will not owe much to him. Accept them both, and make the best of them. In five years he'll be in Parliament as likely as not. In ten years he'll be Sir Daniel Thwaite,—if he cares for it. And in fifteen years Lady Anna will be supposed by everybody to have made a very happy marriage." Lord Lovel was at this time inclined to be submissive in everything to his great adviser, and was now ready to take Mr. Daniel Thwaite by the hand.

He did take him by the hand as he entered the sitting-room, radiant from his bath, clad in a short bright-coloured dressing-gown such as young men then wore o' mornings, with embroidered slippers on his feet, and a smile on his face. "I have heard much of you, Mr. Thwaite," he said, "and am glad to meet you at last. Pray sit down. I hope you have not breakfasted."

Poor Daniel was hardly equal to the occasion. The young lord had been to him always an enemy, —an enemy because the lord had been the adversary of the Countess and her daughter, an enemy because the lord was an earl and idle, an enemy because the lord was his rival. Though he now was nearly sure that this last ground of enmity was at an end, and though he had come to the Earl for certain purposes of his own, he could not bring himself to feel that there should be good fellowship between them. He took the hand that was offered to him, but took it awkwardly, and sat down as he was bidden. “Thank your lordship, but I breakfasted long since. If it will suit you, I will walk about and call again.”

“Not at all. I can eat, and you can talk to me. Take a cup of tea at any rate.” The Earl rang for another teacup, and began to butter his toast.

“I believe your lordship knows that I have long been engaged to marry your lordship’s cousin,—Lady Anna Lovel.”

“Indeed I have been told so.”

“By herself.”

“Well ;—yes ; by herself.”

“I have been allowed to see her but once during the last eight or nine months.”

“That has not been my fault, Mr. Thwaite.”

“I want you to understand, my lord, that it is not for her money that I have sought her.”

“I have not accused you, surely.”

“But I have been accused. I am going to see her now,—if I can get admittance to her. I shall press her to fix a day for our marriage, and if she will do so, I shall leave no stone unturned to accomplish it. She has a right to do with herself as she pleases, and no consideration shall stop me but her wishes.”

“I shall not interfere.”

“I am glad of that, my lord.”

“But I will not answer for her mother. You cannot be surprised, Mr. Thwaite, that Lady Lovel should be averse to such a marriage.”

“She was not averse to my father’s company nor to mine a few years since;—no nor twelve months since. But I say nothing about that. Let her be averse. We cannot help it. I have come to you to say that I hope something may be done about the money before she becomes my wife. People say that you should have it.”

“Who says so?”

“I cannot say who;—perhaps everybody. Should every shilling of it be yours I should marry her as willingly to-morrow. They have given me what is my own, and that is enough for me. For what

is now hers and, perhaps, should be yours, I will not interfere with it. When she is my wife, I will guard for her and for those who may come after her what belongs to her then; but as to what may be done before that, I care nothing."

On hearing this the Earl told him the whole story of the arrangement which was then in progress;—how the property would in fact be divided into three parts, of which the Countess would have one, he one, and Lady Anna one. "There will be enough for us all," said the Earl.

"And much more than enough for me," said Daniel as he got up to take his leave. "And now I am going to Keppel Street."

"You have all my good wishes," said the Earl. The two men again shook hands;—again the lord was radiant and good humoured;—and again the tailor was ashamed and almost sullen. He knew that the young nobleman had behaved well to him, and it was a disappointment to him that any nobleman should behave well.

Nevertheless as he walked away slowly towards Keppel Street,—for the time still hung on his hands,—he began to feel that the great prize of prizes was coming nearer within his grasp.

CHAPTER XLII.

DANIEL THWAITE COMES TO KEPPEL STREET.

EVEN the Bluestones were now convinced that Lady Anna Lovel must be allowed to marry the Keswick tailor, and that it would be expedient that no further impediment should be thrown in her way. Mrs. Bluestone had been told, while walking to Keppel Street with the young lady, of the purport of the letter and of the invitation given to Daniel Thwaite. The Serjeant at once declared that the girl must have her own way,—and the Solicitor-General, who also heard of it, expressed himself very strongly. It was absurd to oppose her. She was her own mistress. She had shown herself competent to manage her own affairs. The Countess must be made to understand that she had better yield at once with what best grace she could. Then it was that he made that prophecy to the Earl as to the future success of the fortunate tailor, and then too he wrote at great length to the Countess, urging

many reasons why her daughter should be allowed to receive Mr. Daniel Thwaite. "Your ladyship has succeeded in very much," wrote the Solicitor-General, "and even in respect of this marriage you will have the satisfaction of feeling that the man is in every way respectable and well-behaved. I hear that he is an educated man, with culture much higher than is generally found in the state of life which he has till lately filled, and that he is a man of high feeling and noble purpose. The manner in which he has been persistent in his attachment to your daughter is in itself evidence of this. And I think that your ladyship is bound to remember that the sphere of life in which he has hitherto been a labourer, would not have been so humble in its nature had not the means which should have started him in the world been applied to support and succour your own cause. I am well aware of your feelings of warm gratitude to the father; but I think you should bear in mind, on the son's behalf, that he has been what he has been because his father was so staunch a friend to your ladyship." There was very much more of it, all expressing the opinion of Sir William that the Countess should at once open her doors to Daniel Thwaite.

The reader need hardly be told that this was wormwood to the Countess. It did not in the least

touch her heart and had but little effect on her purpose. Gratitude;—yes! But if the whole result of the exertion for which the receiver is bound to be grateful, is to be neutralised by the greed of the conferrer of the favour,—if all is to be taken that has been given, and much more also,—what ground will there be left for gratitude? If I save a man's purse from a thief, and then demand for my work twice what that purse contained, the man had better have been left with the robbers. But she was told, not only that she ought to accept the tailor as a son-in-law, but also that she could not help herself. They should see whether she could not help herself. They should be made to acknowledge that she at any rate was in earnest in her endeavours to preserve pure and unspotted the honour of the family.

But what should she do? That she should put on a gala dress and a smiling face and be carried off to church with a troop of lawyers and their wives to see her daughter become the bride of a low journeyman, was of course out of the question. By no act, by no word, by no sign would she give aught of a mother's authority to nuptials so disgraceful. Should her daughter become Lady Anna Thwaite, they two, mother and daughter, would never see each other again. Of so much at any rate she was

sure. But could she be sure of nothing beyond that? She could at any rate make an effort.

Then there came upon her a mad idea,—an idea which was itself evidence of insanity,—of the glory which would be hers if by any means she could prevent the marriage. There would be a halo round her name were she to perish in such a cause, let the destruction come upon her in what form it might. She sat for hours meditating,—and at every pause in her thoughts she assured herself that she could still make an effort.

She received Sir William's letter late on the Tuesday,—and during that night she did not lie down or once fall asleep. The man, as she knew, had been told to come at one on that day, and she had been prepared; but he did not come, and she then thought that the letter, which had been addressed to his late residence, had failed to reach him. During the night she wrote a very long answer to Sir William pleading her own cause, expatiating on her own feelings, and palliating any desperate deed which she might be tempted to perform. But, when the letter had been copied and folded, and duly sealed with the Lovel arms, she locked it in her desk, and did not send it on its way even on the following morning. When the morning came, shortly after eight o'clock, Mrs.

Richards brought up the message which Daniel had left at the door. "Be we to let him in, my lady?" said Mrs. Richards with supplicating hands up-raised. Her sympathies were all with Lady Anna, but she feared the Countess, and did not dare in such a matter to act without the mother's sanction. The Countess begged the woman to come to her in an hour for further instructions, and at the time named Mrs. Richards, full of the importance of her work, divided between terror and pleasurable excitement, again toddled up-stairs. "Be we to let him in, my lady? God, he knows it's hard upon the likes of me, who for the last three months doesn't know whether I'm on my head or heels." The Countess very quietly requested that when Mr. Thwaite should call he might be shown into the parlour.

"I will see Mr. Thwaite myself, Mrs. Richards; but it will be better that my daughter should not be disturbed by any intimation of his coming."

Then there was a consultation below stairs as to what should be done. There had been many such consultations, but they had all ended in favour of the Countess. Mrs. Richards from fear, and the lady's-maid from favour, were disposed to assist the elder lady. Poor Lady Anna throughout had been forced to fight her battles with no friend near her.

Now she had many friends,—many who were anxious to support her, even the Bluestones, who had been so hard upon her while she was along with them;—but they who were now her friends were never near her to assist her with a word.

So it came to pass that when Daniel Thwaite called at the house exactly at one o'clock Lady Anna was not expecting him. On the previous day at that hour she had sat waiting with anxious ears for the knock at the door which might announce his coming. But she had waited in vain. From one to two,—even till seven in the evening, she had waited. But he had not come, and she had feared that some scheme had been used against her. The people at the Post Office had been bribed,—or the women in Wyndham Street had been false. But she would not be hindered. She would go out alone and find him,—if he were to be found in London.

When he did come, she was not thinking of his coming. He was shown into the dining-room, and within a minute afterwards the Countess entered with stately step. She was well dressed, even to the adjustment of her hair; and she was a woman so changed that he would hardly have known her as that dear and valued friend whose slightest word used to be a law to his father,—but who in those days never seemed to waste a thought upon her attire.

She had been out that morning walking through the streets, and the blood had mounted to her cheeks. He acknowledged to himself that she looked like a noble and high-born dame. There was a fire in her eye, and a look of scorn about her mouth and nostrils, which had even for him a certain fascination,—odious to him as were the pretensions of the so-called great. She was the first to speak. “You have called to see my daughter,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Lovel,—I have.”

“You cannot see her.”

“I came at her request.”

“I know you did, but you cannot see her. You can be hardly so ignorant of the ways of the world, Mr. Thwaite, as to suppose that a young lady can receive what visitors she pleases without the sanction of her guardians.”

“Lady Anna Lovel has no guardian, my lady. She is of age, and is at present her own guardian.”

“I am her mother, and shall exercise the authority of a mother over her. You cannot see her. You had better go.”

“I shall not be stopped in this way, Lady Lovel.”

“Do you mean that you will force your way up to her? To do so you will have to trample over me;—and there are constables in the street. You cannot see her. You had better go.”

“Is she a prisoner?”

“That is between her and me, and is no affair of yours. You are intruding here, Mr. Thwaite, and cannot possibly gain anything by your intrusion.” Then she strode out in the passage, and motioned him to the front door. “Mr. Thwaite, I will beg you to leave this house, which for the present is mine. If you have any proper feeling you will not stay after I have told you that you are not welcome.”

But Lady Anna, though she had not expected the coming of her lover, had heard the sound of voices, and then became aware that the man was below. As her mother was speaking she rushed down-stairs and threw herself into her lover's arms. “It shall never be so in my presence,” said the Countess, trying to drag the girl from his embrace by the shoulders. •

“Anna;—my own Anna,” said Daniel in an ecstasy of bliss. It was not only that his sweetheart was his own, but that her spirit was so high.

“Daniel!” she said, still struggling in his arms.

By this time they were all in the parlour, whither the Countess had been satisfied to retreat to escape the eyes of the women who clustered at the top of the kitchen stairs. “Daniel Thwaite,” said the Countess, “if you do not leave this, the blood which

will be shed shall rest on your head," and so saying, she drew nigh to the window and pulled down the blind. She then crossed over and did the same to the other blind, and having done so, took her place close to a heavy upright desk, which stood between the fireplace and the window. When the two ladies first came to the house they had occupied only the first and second floors;—but, since the success of their cause, the whole had been taken, including the parlour in which this scene was being acted; and the Countess spent many hours daily sitting at the heavy desk in this dark gloomy chamber.

"Whose blood shall be shed?" said Lady Anna, turning to her mother.

"It is the raving of madness," said Daniel.

"Whether it be madness or not, you shall find, sir, that it is true. Take your hands from her. Would you disgrace the child in the presence of her mother?"

"There is no disgrace, mamma. He is my own, and I am his. Why should you try to part us?"

But now they were parted. He was not a man to linger much over the sweetness of a caress when sterner work was in his hands to be done. "Lady Lovel," he said, "you must see that this opposition is fruitless. Ask your cousin, Lord Lovel, and he will tell you that it is so."

“I care nothing for my cousin. If he be false, I am true. Though all the world be false, still will I be true. I do not ask her to marry her cousin. I simply demand that she shall relinquish one who is infinitely beneath her,—who is unfit to tie her very shoe-string.”

“He is my equal in all things,” said Lady Anna, “and he shall be my lord and husband.”

“I know of no inequalities such as those you speak of, Lady Lovel,” said the tailor. “The excellence of your daughter’s merits I admit, and am almost disposed to claim some goodness for myself, finding that one so good can love me. But, Lady Lovel, I do not wish to remain here now. You are disturbed.”

“I am disturbed, and you had better go.”

“I will go at once if you will let me name some early day on which I may be allowed to meet Lady Anna,—alone. And I tell her here that if she be not permitted so to see me, it will be her duty to leave her mother’s house, and come to me. There is my address, dear.” Then he handed to her a paper on which he had written the name of the street and number at which he was now living. “You are free to come and go as you list, and if you will send to me there, I will find you here or elsewhere as you may command me. It is but a

short five minutes' walk beyond the house at which you were staying in Bedford Square."

The Countess stood silent for a moment or two, looking at them, during which neither the girl spoke nor her lover. "You will not even allow her six months to think of it?" said the Countess.

"I will allow her six years if she says that she requires time to think of it."

"I do not want an hour,—not a minute," said Lady Anna.

The mother flashed round upon her daughter. "Poor vain, degraded wretch," she said.

"She is a true woman, honest to the heart's core," said the lover.

"You shall come to-morrow," said the Countess. "Do you hear me, Anna?—he shall come to-morrow. There shall be an end of this in some way, and I am broken-hearted. My life is over for me, and I may as well lay me down and die. I hope God in his mercy may never send upon another woman,—upon another wife, or another mother,—trouble such as that with which I have been afflicted. But I tell you this, Anna; that what evil a husband can do,—even let him be evil-minded as was your father,—is nothing,—nothing,—nothing to the cruelty of a cruel child. Go now, Mr. Thwaite; if you please. If you will

return at the same hour to-morrow she shall speak with you—alone. And then she must do as she pleases.”

“Anna, I will come again to-morrow,” said the tailor. But Lady Anna did not answer him. She did not speak, but stayed looking at him till he was gone.

“To-morrow shall end it all. I can stand this no longer. I have prayed to you,—a mother to her daughter; I have prayed to you for mercy, and you will show me none. I have knelt to you.”

“Mamma!”

“I will kneel again if it may avail.” And the Countess did kneel. “Will you not spare me?”

“Get up, mamma; get up. What am I doing,—what have I done that you should speak to me like this?”

“I ask you from my very soul,—lest I commit some terrible crime. I have sworn that I would not see this marriage,—and I will not see it.”

“If he will consent I will delay it,” said the girl trembling.

“Must I beg to him then? Must I kneel to him? Must I ask him to save me from the wrath to come? No, my child, I will not do that. If it must come, let it come. When you were a little thing at my knees, the gentlest babe that ever

mother kissed, I did not think that you would live to be so hard to me. You have your mother's brow, my child, but you have your father's heart."

"I will ask him to delay it," said Anna.

"No;—if it be to come to that I will have no dealings with you. What; that he,—he who has come between me and all my peace, he who with his pretended friendship has robbed me of my all, that he is to be asked to grant me a few weeks' delay before this pollution comes upon me,—during which the whole world will know that Lady Anna Lovel is to be the tailor's wife! Leave me. When he comes to-morrow, you shall be sent for;—but I will see him first. Leave me, now. I would be alone."

Lady Anna made an attempt to take her mother's hand, but the Countess repulsed her rudely. "Oh, mamma!"

"We must be bitter enemies or loving friends, my child. As it is we are bitter enemies; yes, the bitterest. Leave me now. There is no room for further words between us." Then Lady Anna slunk up to her own room.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DANIEL THWAITE COMES AGAIN.

THE Countess Lovel had prepared herself on that morning for the doing of a deed, but her heart had failed her. How she might have carried herself through it had not her daughter come down to them,—how far she might have been able to persevere, cannot be said now. But it was certain that she had so far relented that even while the hated man was there in her presence, she determined that she would once again submit herself to make entreaties to her child, once again to speak of all that she had endured, and to pray at least for delay if nothing else could be accorded to her. If her girl would but promise to remain with her for six months, then they might go abroad,—and the chances afforded them by time and distance would be before her. In that case she would lavish such love upon the girl, so many indulgences, such sweets of wealth and ease, such store of caresses and soft

luxury, that surely the young heart might thus be turned to the things which were fit for rank, and high blood, and splendid possessions. It could not be but that her own child,—the child who a few months since had been as gentle with her and as obedient as an infant,—should give way to her as far as that. She tried it, and her daughter had referred her prayer,—or had said that she would refer it,—to the decision of her hated lover; and the mother had at once lost all command of her temper. She had become fierce,—nay, ferocious; and had lacked the guile and the self-command necessary to carry out her purpose. Had she persevered Lady Anna must have granted her the small boon that she then asked. But she had given way to her wrath, and had declared that her daughter was her bitterest enemy. As she seated herself at the old desk where Lady Anna left her, she swore within her own bosom that the deed must be done.

Even at the moment when she was resolving that she would kneel once more at her daughter's knees, she prepared herself for the work that she must do, should the daughter still be as hard as stone to her. "Come again at one to-morrow," she said to the tailor; and the tailor said that he would come.

When she was alone she seated herself on her

accustomed chair and opened the old desk with a key that had now become familiar to her hand. It was a huge piece of furniture,—such as is never made in these days, but is found among every congregation of old household goods,—with numberless drawers clustering below, with a vast body, full of receptacles for bills, wills, deeds, and waste-paper, and a tower of shelves above, ascending almost to the ceiling. In the centre of the centre body was a square compartment, but this had been left unlocked, so that its contents might be ready to her hand. Now she opened it and took from it a pistol; and, looking warily over her shoulder to see that the door was closed, and cautiously up at the windows, lest some eye might be spying her action even through the thick blinds, she took the weapon in her hand and held it up so that she might feel, if possible, how it would be with her when she should attempt the deed. She looked very narrowly at the lock, of which the trigger was already back at its place, so that no exertion of arrangement might be necessary for her at the fatal moment. Never as yet had she fired a pistol;—never before had she held such a weapon in her hand;—but she thought that she could do it when her passion ran high.

Then for the twentieth time she asked herself whether it would not be easier to turn it against her

own bosom,—against her own brain; so that all might be over at once. Ah, yes;—so much easier! But how then would it be with this man who had driven her, by his subtle courage and persistent audacity, to utter destruction? Could he and she be made to go down together in that boat which her fancy had built for them, then indeed it might be well that she should seek her own death. But were she now to destroy herself,—herself and only herself,—then would her enemy be left to enjoy his rich prize, a prize only the richer because she would have disappeared from the world! And of her, if such had been her last deed, men would only say that the mad Countess had gone on in her madness. With looks of sad solemnity, but heartfelt satisfaction, all the Lovels, and that wretched tailor, and her own daughter, would bestow some mock grief on her funeral, and there would be an end for ever of Josephine Countess Lovel,—and no one would remember her, or her deeds, or her sufferings. When she wandered out from the house on that morning, after hearing that Daniel Thwaite would be there at one, and had walked nearly into the mid city so that she might not be watched, and had bought her pistol and powder and bullets, and had then with patience gone to work and taught herself how to prepare

the weapon for use, she certainly had not intended simply to make the triumph of her enemy more easy.

And yet she knew well what was the penalty of murder, and she knew also that there could be no chance of escape. Very often had she turned it in her mind, whether she could not destroy the man so that the hand of the destroyer might be hidden. But it could not be so. She could not dog him in the streets. She could not get at him in his meals to poison him. She could not creep to his bedside and strangle him in the silent watches of the night. And this woman's heart, even while from day to day she was meditating murder,—while she was telling herself that it would be a worthy deed to cut off from life one whose life was a bar to her own success,—even then revolted from the shrinking stealthy step, from the low cowardice of the hidden murderer. To look him in the face and then to slay him,—when no escape for herself would be possible, that would have in it something that was almost noble; something at any rate bold,—something that would not shame her. They would hang her for such a deed! Let them do so. It was not hanging that she feared, but the tongues of those who should speak of her when she was gone. They should not speak of her as one who had utterly

failed. They should tell of a woman who, cruelly misused throughout her life, maligned, scorned, and tortured, robbed of her own, neglected by her kindred, deserted and damned by her husband, had still struggled through it all till she had proved herself to be that which it was her right to call herself;—of a woman who, though thwarted in her ambition by her own child, and cheated of her triumph at the very moment of her success, had dared rather to face an ignominious death than see all her efforts frustrated by the maudlin fancy of a girl. Yes! She would face it all. Let them do what they would with her. She hardly knew what might be the mode of death adjudged to a Countess who had murdered. Let them kill her as they would, they would kill a Countess;—and the whole world would know her story.

That day and night were very dreadful to her. She never asked a question about her daughter. They had brought her food to her in that lonely parlour, and she hardly heeded them as they laid the things before her, and then removed them. Again and again did she unlock the old desk, and see that the weapon was ready to her hand. Then she opened that letter to Sir William Patterson, and added a postscript to it. “What I have since done will explain everything.” That was all she added,

and on the following morning, about noon, she put the letter on the mantelshelf. Late at night she took herself to bed, and was surprised to find that she slept. The key of the old desk was under her pillow, and she placed her hand on it the moment that she awoke. On leaving her own room she stood for a moment at her daughter's door. It might be, if she killed the man, that she would never see her child again. At that moment she was tempted to rush into her daughter's room, to throw herself upon her daughter's bed, and once again to beg for mercy and grace. She listened, and she knew that her daughter slept. Then she went silently down to the dark room and the old desk. Of what use would it be to abase herself? Her daughter was the only thing that she could love; but her daughter's heart was filled with the image of that low-born artisan.

"Is Lady Anna up?" she asked the maid about ten o'clock.

"Yes, my lady; she is breakfasting now."

"Tell her that when—when Mr. Thwaite comes, I will send for her as soon as I wish to see her."

"I think Lady Anna understands that already, my lady."

"Tell her what I say."

"Yes, my lady. I will, my lady." Then the

Countess spoke no further word till, punctually at one o'clock, Daniel Thwaite was shown into the room.

"You keep your time, Mr. Thwaite," she said.

"Working men should always do that, Lady Lovel," he replied, as though anxious to irritate her by reminding her how humble was the man who could aspire to be the son-in-law of a Countess.

"All men should do so, I presume. I also am punctual. Well sir;—have you anything else to say?"

"Much to say,—to your daughter, Lady Lovel."

"I do not know that you will ever see my daughter again."

"Do you mean to say that she has been taken away from this?" The Countess was silent, but moved away from the spot on which she stood to receive him towards the old desk, which stood open, —with the door of the centre space just ajar. "If it be so, you have deceived me most grossly, Lady Lovel. But it can avail you nothing, for I know that she will be true to me. Do you tell me that she has been removed?"

"I have told you no such thing."

"Bid her come then,—as you promised me."

"I have a word to say to you first. What if she should refuse to come?"

“I do not believe that she will refuse. You yourself heard what she said yesterday. All earth and all heaven should not make me doubt her, and certainly not your word, Lady Lovel. You know how it is, and you know how it must be.”

“Yes,—I do; I do; I do.” She was facing him with her back to the window, and she put forth her left hand upon the open desk, and thrust it forward as though to open the square door which stood ajar;—but he did not notice her hand; he had his eye fixed upon her, and suspected only deceit,—not violence. “Yes, I know how it must be,” she said, while her fingers approached nearer to the little door.

“Then let her come to me.”

“Will nothing turn you from it?”

“Nothing will turn me from it.”

Then suddenly she withdrew her hand and confronted him more closely. “Mine has been a hard life, Mr. Thwaite;—no life could have been harder. But I have always had something before me for which to long, and for which to hope;—something which I might reach if justice should at length prevail.”

“You have got money and rank.”

“They are nothing;—nothing. In all those many years, the thing that I have looked for has

been the splendour and glory of another, and the satisfaction I might feel in having bestowed upon her all that she owned. Do you think that I will stand by, after such a struggle, and see you rob me of it all,—you,—you, who were one of the tools which came to my hand to work with? From what you know of me, do you think that my spirit could stoop so low? Answer me, if you have ever thought of that. Let the eagles alone, and do not force yourself into our nest. You will find, if you do, that you will be rent to pieces.”

“ This is nothing, Lady Lovel. I came here,—at your bidding, to see your daughter. Let me see her.”

“ You will not go ? ”

“ Certainly I will not go.”

She looked at him as she slowly receded to her former standing-ground, but he never for a moment suspected the nature of her purpose. He began to think that some actual insanity had befallen her, and was doubtful how he should act. But no fear of personal violence affected him. He was merely questioning with himself whether it would not be well for him to walk up-stairs into the upper room, and seek Lady Anna there, as he stood watching the motion of her eyes.

“ You had better go,” said she, as she again put

her left hand on the flat board of the open desk.

“ You trifle with me, Lady Lovel,” he answered. “ As you will not allow Lady Anna to come to me here, I will go to her elsewhere. I do not doubt but that I shall find her in the house.” Then he turned to the door, intending to leave the room. He had been very near to her while they were talking, so that he had some paces to traverse before he could put his hand upon the lock,—but in doing so his back was turned on her. In one respect it was better for her purpose that it should be so. She could open the door of the compartment and put her hand upon the pistol without having his eye upon her. But, as it seemed to her at the moment, the chance of bringing her purpose to its intended conclusion was less than it would have been had she been able to fire at his face. She had let the moment go by,—the first moment,—when he was close to her, and now there would be half the room between them. But she was very quick. She seized the pistol, and, transferring it to her right hand, she rushed after him, and when the door was already half open she pulled the trigger. In the agony of that moment she heard no sound, though she saw the flash. She saw him shrink and pass the door, which he left unclosed,

and then she heard a scuffle in the passage, as though he had fallen against the wall. She had provided herself especially with a second barrel,—but that was now absolutely useless to her. There was no power left to her wherewith to follow him and complete the work which she had begun. She did not think that she had killed him, though she was sure that he was struck. She did not believe that she had accomplished anything of her wishes,—but had she held in her hand a six-barrelled revolver, as of the present day, she could have done no more with it. She was overwhelmed with so great a tremor at her own violence that she was almost incapable of moving. She stood glaring at the door, listening for what should come, and the moments seemed to be hours. But she heard no sound whatever. A minute passed away perhaps, and the man did not move. She looked around as if seeking some way of escape,—as though, were it possible, she would get to the street through the window. There was no mode of escape, unless she would pass out through the door to the man who, as she knew, must still be there. Then she heard him move. She heard him rise,—from what posture she knew not, and step towards the stairs. She was still standing with the pistol in her hand, but was almost unconscious that she held it. At last her

eye glanced upon it, and she was aware that she was still armed. Should she rush after him, and try what she could do with that other bullet? The thought crossed her mind, but she knew that she could do nothing. Had all the Lovels depended upon it, she could not have drawn that other trigger. She took the pistol, put it back into its former hiding-place, mechanically locked the little door, and then seated herself in her chair.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ATTEMPT AND NOT THE DEED CONFOUNDS US.

THE tailor's hand was on the lock of the door when he first saw the flash of the fire, and then felt that he was wounded. Though his back was turned to the woman he distinctly saw the flash, but he never could remember that he had heard the report. He knew nothing of the nature of the injury he had received, and was hardly aware of the place in which he had been struck, when he half closed the door behind him and then staggered against the opposite wall. For a moment he was sick, almost to fainting, but yet he did not believe that he had been grievously hurt. He was, however, disabled, weak, and almost incapable of any action. He seated himself on the lowest stair, and began to think. The woman had intended to murder him! She had lured him there with the premeditated intention of destroying him! And this was the mother of his bride,—the woman whom he in-

tended to call his mother-in-law! He was not dead, nor did he believe that he was like to die; but had she killed him,—what must have been the fate of the murderess! As it was, would it not be necessary that she should be handed over to the law, and dealt with for the offence? He did not know that they might not even hang her for the attempt.

He said afterwards that he thought that he sat there for a quarter of an hour. Three minutes, however, had not passed before Mrs. Richards, ascending from the kitchen, found him upon the stairs. “What is it, Mr. Thwaite?” said she.

“Is anything the matter?” he asked with a faint smile.

“The place is full of smoke,” she said, “and there is a smell of gunpowder.”

“There is no harm done at any rate,” he answered.

“I thought I heard a something go off,” said Sarah, who was behind Mrs. Richards.

“Did you?” said he. “I heard nothing; but there certainly is a smoke,” and he still smiled.

“What are you sitting there for, Mr. Thwaite?” asked Mrs. Richards.

“You ain’t no business to sit there, Mr. Thwaite,” said Sarah.

“ You’ve been and done something to the Countess,” said Mrs. Richards.

“ The Countess is all right. I’m going up-stairs to see Lady Anna ;—that’s all. But I’ve hurt myself a little. I’m bad in my left shoulder, and I sat down just to get a rest.” As he spoke he was still smiling.

Then the woman looked at him and saw that he was very pale. At that instant he was in great pain, though he felt that as the sense of intense sickness was leaving him he would be able to go up-stairs and say a word or two to his sweetheart, should he find her. “ You ain’t just as you ought to be, Mr. Thwaite,” said Mrs. Richards. He was very haggard, and perspiration was on his brow, and she thought that he had been drinking.

“ I am well enough,” said he rising,—“ only that I am much troubled by a hurt in my arm. At any rate I will go up-stairs.” Then he mounted slowly, leaving the two women standing in the passage.

Mrs. Richards gently opened the parlour door, and entered the room, which was still reeking with smoke and the smell of the powder, and there she found the Countess seated at the old desk, but with her body and face turned round towards the door. “ Is anything the matter, my lady ? ” asked the woman.

“Where has he gone?”

“Mr. Thwaite has just stepped up-stairs,—this moment. He was very queer like, my lady.”

“Is he hurt?”

“We think he’s been drinking, my lady,” said Sarah.

“He says that his shoulder is ever so bad,” said Mrs. Richards.

Then for the first time it occurred to the Countess that perhaps the deed which she had done,—the attempt in which she had failed,—might never be known. Instinctively she had hidden the pistol and had locked the little door, and concealed the key within her bosom as soon as she was alone. Then she thought that she would open the window; but she had been afraid to move, and she had sat there waiting while she heard the sound of voices in the passage. “Oh,—his shoulder!” said she. “No,—he has not been drinking. He never drinks. He has been very violent, but he never drinks. Well,—why do you wait?”

“There is such a smell of something,” said Mrs. Richards.

“Yes;—you had better open the windows. There was an accident. Thank you;—that will do.”

“And is he to be alone,—with Lady Anna, up-stairs?” asked the maid.

“He is to be alone with her. How can I help it? If she chooses to be a scullion she must follow her bent. I have done all I could. Why do you wait? I tell you that he is to be with her. Go away, and leave me.” Then they went and left her, wondering much, but guessing nothing of the truth. She watched them till they had closed the door, and then instantly opened the other window wide. It was now May, but the weather was still cold. There had been rain the night before, and it had been showery all the morning. She had come in from her walk damp and chilled, and there was a fire in the grate. But she cared nothing for the weather. Looking round the room she saw a morsel of wadding near the floor, and she instantly burned it. She longed to look at the pistol, but she did not dare to take it from its hiding-place lest she should be discovered in the act. Every energy of her mind was now strained to the effort of avoiding detection. Should he choose to tell what had been done, then, indeed, all would be over. But had he not resolved to be silent he would hardly have borne the agony of the wound and gone up-stairs without speaking of it. She almost forgot now the misery of the last year in the intensity of her desire to escape the disgrace of punishment. A sudden nervousness, a

desire to do something by which she might help to preserve herself, seized upon her. But there was nothing which she could do. She could not follow him lest he should accuse her to her face. It would be vain for her to leave the house till he should have gone. Should she do so, she knew that she would not dare return to it. So she sat, thinking, dreaming, plotting, crushed by an agony of fear, looking anxiously at the door, listening for every footfall within the house; and she watched too for the well-known click of the area gate, dreading lest any one should go out to seek the intervention of the constables.

In the meantime Daniel Thwaite had gone upstairs, and had knocked at the drawing-room door. It was instantly opened by Lady Anna herself. "I heard you come;—what a time you have been here!—I thought that I should never see you." As she spoke she stood close to him that he might embrace her. But the pain of his wound affected his whole body, and he felt that he could hardly raise even his right arm. He was aware now that the bullet had entered his back, somewhere on his left shoulder. "Oh, Daniel;—are you ill?" she said, looking at him.

"Yes, dear;—I am ill;—not very ill. Did you hear nothing?"

“No!”

“Nor yet see anything?”

“No!”

“I will tell you all another time;—only do not ask me now.” She had seated herself beside him and wound her arm round his back as though to support him. “You must not touch me, dearest.”

“You have been hurt.”

“Yes;—I have been hurt. I am in pain, though I do not think that it signifies. I had better go to a surgeon, and then you shall hear from me.”

“Tell me, Daniel;—what is it, Daniel?”

“I will tell you,—but not now. You shall know all, but I should do harm were I to say it now. Say not a word to any one, sweetheart,—unless your mother ask you.”

“What shall I tell her?”

“That I am hurt,—but not seriously hurt;—and that the less said the sooner mended. Tell her also that I shall expect no further interruption to my letters when I write to you,—or to my visits when I can come. God bless you, dearest;—one kiss, and now I will go.”

“You will send for me if you are ill, Daniel?”

“If I am really ill, I will send for you.” So saying, he left her, went down-stairs, with great

difficulty opened for himself the front door, and departed.

Lady Anna, though she had been told nothing of what had happened, except that her lover was hurt, at once surmised something of what had been done. Daniel Thwaite had suffered some hurt from her mother's wrath. She sat for a while thinking what it might have been. She had seen no sign of blood. Could it be that her mother had struck him in her anger with some chance weapon that had come to hand? That there had been violence she was sure,—and sure also that her mother had been in fault. When Daniel had been some few minutes gone she went down, that she might deliver his message. At the foot of the stairs, and near the door of the parlour, she met Mrs. Richards. "I suppose the young man has gone, my lady?" asked the woman.

"Mr. Thwaite has gone."

"And I make so bold, my lady, as to say that he ought not to come here. There has been a doing of some kind, but I don't know what. He says as how he's been hurt, and I'm sure I don't know how he should be hurt here,—unless he brought it with him. I never had nothing of the kind here before, long as I've been here. Of course your title and that is all right, my lady; but the young man isn't fit;—"

that's the truth of it. My belief is he'd been a drinking; and I won't have it in my house."

Lady Anna passed by her without a word and went into her mother's room. The Countess was still seated in her chair, and neither rose nor spoke when her daughter entered. "Mamma, Mr. Thwaite is hurt."

"Well;—what of it? Is it much that ails him?"

"He is in pain. What has been done, mamma?" The Countess looked at her, striving to learn from the girl's face and manner what had been told and what concealed. "Did you——strike him?"

"Has he said that I struck him?"

"No, mamma;—but something has been done that should not have been done. I know it. He has sent you a message, mamma."

"What was it?" asked the Countess, in a hoarse voice.

"That he was hurt, but not seriously."

"Oh;—he said that."

"I fear he is hurt seriously."

"But he said that he was not?"

"Yes;—and that the less said the sooner mended."

"Did he say that too?"

"That was his message."

The Countess gave a long sigh, then sobbed, and

at last broke out into hysteric tears. It was evident to her now that the man was sparing her,—was endeavouring to spare her. He had told no one as yet. “The least said the soonest mended.” Oh yes ;—if he would say never a word to any one of what had occurred between them that day, that would be best for her. But how could he not tell? When some doctor should ask him how he had come by that wound, surely he would tell then! It could not be possible that such a deed should have been done there, in that little room, and that no one should know it! And why should he not tell,—he who was her enemy? Had she caught him at advantage, would she not have smote him, hip and thigh? And then she reflected what it would be to owe perhaps her life to the mercy of Daniel Thwaite,—to the mercy of her enemy, of him who knew,—if no one else should know,—that she had attempted to murder him. It would be better for her, should she be spared to do so, to go away to some distant land, where she might hide her head for ever.

“May I go to him, mamma, to see him?” Lady Anna asked. The Countess, full of her own thoughts, sat silent, answering not a word. “I know where he lives, mamma, and I fear that he is much hurt.”

“He will not——die,” muttered the Countess.

“God forbid that he should die;—but I will go

to him." Then she returned up-stairs without a word of opposition from her mother, put on her bonnet, and sallied forth. No one stopped her or said a word to her now, and she seemed to herself to be as free as air. She walked up to the corner of Gower Street, and turned down into Bedford Square, passing the house of the Serjeant. Then she asked her way into Great Russell Street, which she found to be hardly more than a stone's throw from the Serjeant's door, and soon found the number at which her lover lived. No;—Mr. Thwaite was not at home. Yes;—she might wait for him;—but he had no room but his bedroom. Then she became very bold. "I am engaged to be his wife," she said. "Are you the Lady Anna?" asked the woman, who had heard the story. Then she was received with great distinction, and invited to sit down in a parlour on the ground-floor. There she sat for three hours, motionless, alone,—waiting,—waiting,—waiting. When it was quite dark, at about six o'clock, Daniel Thwaite entered the room with his left arm bound up. "My girl!" he said, with so much joy in his tone that she could not but rejoice to hear him. "So you have found me out, and have come to me!"

"Yes, I have come. Tell me what it is. I know that you are hurt."

“I have been hurt certainly. The doctor wanted me to go into a hospital, but I trust that I may escape that. But I must take care of myself. I had to come back here in a coach, because the man told me not to walk.”

“How was it, Daniel? Oh, Daniel, you will tell me everything?”

Then she sat beside him as he lay upon the couch, and listened to him while he told her the whole story. He hid nothing from her, but as he went on he made her understand that it was his intention to conceal the whole deed, to say nothing of it, so that the perpetrator should escape punishment, if it might be possible. She listened in awe-struck silence as she heard the tale of her mother's guilt. And he, with wonderful skill, with hearty love for the girl, and in true mercy to her feelings, palliated the crime of the would-be murderess. “She was beside herself with grief and emotion,” he said, “and has hardly surprised me by what she has done. Had I thought of it, I should almost have expected it.”

“She may do it again, Daniel.”

“I think not. She will be cowed now, and quieter. She did not interfere when you told her that you were coming to me? It will be a lesson to her, and so it may be good for us.” Then he

bade her to tell her mother that he, as far as he was concerned, would hold his peace. If she would forget all past injuries, so would he. If she would hold out her hand to him, he would take it. If she could not bring herself to this,—could not bring herself as yet,—then let her go apart. No notice should be taken of what she had done. “But she must not again stand between us,” he said.

“Nothing shall stand between us,” said Lady Anna.

Then he told her, laughing as he did so, how hard it had been for him to keep the story of his wound secret from the doctor, who had already extracted the ball, and who was to visit him on the morrow. The practitioner to whom he had gone, knowing nothing of gunshot wounds, had taken him to a first-class surgeon, and the surgeon had of course asked as to the cause of the wound. Daniel had said that it was an accident as to which he could not explain the cause. “You mean you will not tell,” said the surgeon. “Exactly so. I will not tell. It is my secret. That I did not do it myself you may judge from the spot in which I was shot.” To this the surgeon assented; and, though he pressed the question, and said something as to the necessity for an investigation, he could get no satisfaction. However, he had learned Daniel’s

name and address. He was to call on the morrow, and would then perhaps succeed in learning something of the mystery. "In the meantime, my darling, I must go to bed, for it seems as though every bone in my body was sore. I have brought an old woman with me who is to look after me."

Then she left him, promising that she would come on the morrow and would nurse him. "Unless they lock me up, I will be here," she said. Daniel Thwaite thought that in the present circumstances no further attempt would be made to constrain her actions.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE LAWYERS AGREE.

WHEN a month had passed by a great many people knew how Mr. Daniel Thwaite had come by the wound in his back, but nobody knew it "officially." There is a wide difference in the qualities of knowledge regarding such matters. In affairs of public interest we often know, or fancy that we know, down to every exact detail, how a thing has been done,—who have given the bribes and who have taken them,—who has told the lie and who has pretended to believe it,—who has peculated and how the public purse has suffered,—who was in love with such a one's wife and how the matter was detected, then smothered up, and condoned; but there is no official knowledge, and nothing can be done. The tailor and the Earl, the Countess and her daughter, had become public property since the great trial had been commenced, and many eyes were on them. Before a week had gone by it was

known in every club and in every great drawing-room that the tailor had been shot in the shoulder,—and it was almost known that the pistol had been fired by the hands of the Countess. The very eminent surgeon into whose hands Daniel had luckily fallen did not press his questions very far when his patient told him that it would be for the welfare of many people that nothing further should be asked on the matter. “An accident has occurred,” said Daniel, “as to which I do not intend to say anything further. I can assure you that no injury has been done beyond that which I suffer.” The eminent surgeon no doubt spoke of the matter among his friends, but he always declared that he had no certain knowledge as to the hand which fired the pistol.

The women in Keppel Street of course talked. There had certainly been a smoke and a smell of gunpowder. Mrs. Richards had heard nothing. Sarah thought that she had heard a noise. They both were sure that Daniel Thwaite had been much the worse for drink,—a statement which led to considerable confusion. No pistol was ever seen,—though the weapon remained in the old desk for some days, and was at last conveyed out of the house when the Countess left it with all her belongings. She had been afraid to hide it more stealthily or

even throw it away, lest her doing so should be discovered. Had the law interfered,—had any search-warrant been granted,—the pistol would, of course, have been found. As it was, no one asked the Countess a question on the subject. The lawyers who had been her friends, and had endeavoured to guide her through her difficulties, became afraid of her, and kept aloof from her. They had all gone over to the opinion that Lady Anna should be allowed to marry the tailor, and had on that account become her enemies. She was completely isolated, and was now spoken of mysteriously,—as a woman who had suffered much, and was nearly mad with grief, as a violent, determined, dangerous being, who was interesting as a subject for conversation, but one not at all desirable as an acquaintance. During the whole of this month the Countess remained in Keppel Street, and was hardly ever seen by any but the inmates of that house.

Lady Anna had returned home all alone, on the evening of the day on which the deed had been done, after leaving her lover in the hands of the old nurse with whose services he had been furnished. The rain was still falling as she came through Russell Square. The distance was indeed short, but she was wet and cold and draggled when she returned; and the criminality of the deed which

her mother had committed had come fully home to her mind during the short journey. The door was opened to her by Mrs. Richards, and she at once asked for the Countess. "Lady Anna, where have you been?" asked Mrs. Richards, who was learning to take upon herself, during these troubles, something of the privilege of finding fault. But Lady Anna put her aside without a word, and went into the parlour. There sat the Countess just as she had been left,—except that a pair of candles stood upon the table, and that the tea-things had been laid there. "You are all wet," she said. "Where have you been?"

"He has told me all," the girl replied, without answering the question. "Oh, mamma;—how could you do it?"

"Who has driven me to it? It has been you,—you, you. Well;—what else?"

"Mamma, he has forgiven you."

"Forgiven me! I will not have his forgiveness."

"Oh, mamma;—if I forgive you, will you not be friends with us?" She stooped over her mother, and kissed her, and then went on and told what she had to tell. She stood and told it all in a low voice, so that no ear but that of her mother should hear her,—how the ball had hit him, how it had been

extracted, how nothing had been and nothing should be told, how Daniel would forgive it all and be her friend, if she would let him. "But, mamma, I hope you will be sorry." The Countess sat silent, moody, grim, with her eyes fixed on the table. She would say nothing. "And, mamma,—I must go to him every day,—to do things for him and to help to nurse him. Of course he will be my husband now." Still the Countess said not a word, either of approval or of dissent. Lady Anna sat down for a moment or two, hoping that her mother would allow her to eat and drink in the room, and that thus they might again begin to live together. But not a word was spoken nor a motion made, and the silence became awful, so that the girl did not dare to keep her seat. "Shall I go, mamma?" she said.

"Yes;—you had better go." After that they did not see each other again on that evening, and during the week or ten days following they lived apart.

On the following morning, after an early breakfast, Lady Anna went to Great Russell Street, and there she remained the greater part of the day. The people of the house understood that the couple were to be married as soon as their lodger should be well, and had heard much of the magnificence of

the marriage. They were kind and good, and the tailor declared very often that this was the happiest period of his existence. Of all the good turns ever done to him, he said, the wound in his back had been the best. As his sweetheart sat by his bedside they planned their future life. They would still go to the distant land on which his heart was set, though it might be only for awhile; and she, with playfulness, declared that she would go there as Mrs. Thwaite. "I suppose they can't prevent me calling myself Mrs. Thwaite, if I please."

"I am not so sure of that," said the tailor. "Evil burs stick fast."

It would be vain now to tell of all the sweet lovers' words that were spoken between them during those long hours;—but the man believed that no girl had ever been so true to her lover through so many difficulties as Lady Anna had been to him, and she was sure that she had never varied in her wish to become the wife of the man who had first asked her for her love. She thought much and she thought often of the young lord; but she took the impress of her lover's mind, and learned to regard her cousin, the Earl, as an idle, pretty popinjay, born to eat, to drink, and to carry sweet perfumes. "Just a butterfly," said the tailor.

"One of the brightest butterflies," said the girl.

“A woman should not be a butterfly,—not altogether a butterfly,” he answered. “But for a man it is surely a contemptible part. Do you remember the young man who comes to Hotspur on the battle-field, or him whom the king sent to Hamlet about the wager? When I saw Lord Lovel at his breakfast table, I thought of them. I said to myself that spermaceti was the ‘sovereignest thing on earth for an inward wound,’ and I told myself that he was of ‘very soft society, and great showing.’” She smiled, though she did not know the words he quoted, and assured him that her poor cousin Lord Lovel would not trouble him much in the days that were to come. “He will not trouble me at all, but as he is your cousin I would fain that he could be a man. He had a sort of gown on which would have made a grand frock for you, sweetheart;—only too smart I fear for my wife.” She laughed and was pleased,—and remembered without a shade either of regret or remorse the manner in which the popinjay had helped her over the stepping-stones at Bolton Abbey.

But the tailor, though he thus scorned the lord, was quite willing that a share of the property should be given up to him. “Unless you did, how on earth could he wear such grand gowns as that? I can understand that he wants it more than I do,

and if there are to be earls, I suppose they should be rich. We do not want it, my girl."

"You will have half, Daniel," she said.

"As far as that goes, I do not want a doit of it,—not a penny-piece. When they paid me what became my own by my father's will, I was rich enough,—rich enough for you and me too, my girl, if that was all. But it is better that it should be divided. If he had it all he would buy too many gowns; and it may be that with us some good will come of it. As far as I can see, no good comes of money spent on race-courses, and in gorgeous gowns."

This went on from day to day throughout a month, and every day Lady Anna took her place with her lover. After a while her mother came up into the drawing-room in Keppel Street, and then the two ladies again lived together. Little or nothing, however, was said between them as to their future lives. The Countess was quiet, sullen,—and to a bystander would have appeared to be indifferent. She had been utterly vanquished by the awe inspired by her own deed, and by the fear which had lasted for some days that she might be dragged to trial for the offence. As that dread subsided she was unable to recover her former spirits. She spoke no more of what she had done and what

she had suffered, but seemed to submit to the inevitable. She said nothing of any future life that might be in store for her, and, as far as her daughter could perceive, had no plans formed for the coming time. At last Lady Anna found it necessary to speak of her own plans. "Mamma," she said, "Mr. Thwaite wishes that banns should be read in church for our marriage."

"Banns!" exclaimed the Countess.

"Yes, mamma; he thinks it best." The Countess made no further observation. If the thing was to be, it mattered little to her whether they were to be married by banns or by licence,—whether her girl should walk down to church like a maid-servant, or be married with all the pomp and magnificence to which her rank and wealth might entitle her. How could there be splendour, how even decency, in such a marriage as this? She at any rate would not be present, let them be married in what way they would. On the fourth Sunday after the shot had been fired the banns were read for the first time in Bloomsbury Church, and the future bride was described as Anna Lovel,—commonly called Lady Anna Lovel,—spinster. Neither on that occasion, or on either of the two further callings, did any one get up in church to declare that impediment existed why David Thwaite the tailor and Lady

Anna Lovel should not be joined together in holy matrimony.

In the mean time the lawyers had been at work dividing the property, and in the process of doing so it had been necessary that Mr. Goffe should have various interviews with the Countess. She also, as the undisputed widow of the late intestate Earl, was now a very rich woman, with an immense income at her control. But no one wanted assistance from her. There was her revenue, and she was doomed to live apart with it in her solitude,—with no fellow-creature to rejoice with her in her triumph, with no dependant whom she could make happy with her wealth. She was a woman with many faults,—but covetousness was not one of them. If she could have given it all to the young Earl,—and her daughter with it, she would have been a happy woman. Had she been permitted to dream that it was all so settled that her grandchild would become of all Earl Lovels the most wealthy and most splendid, she would have triumphed indeed. But, as it was, there was no spot in her future career brighter to her than those long years of suffering which she had passed in the hope that some day her child might be successful. Triumph indeed! There was nothing before her but solitude and shame.

Nevertheless she listened to Mr. Goffe, and signed the papers that were put before her. When, however, he spoke to her of what was necessary for the marriage,—as to the settlement, which must, Mr. Goffe said, be made as to the remaining moiety of her daughter's property,—she answered curtly that she knew nothing of that. Her daughter's affairs were no concern of hers. She had, indeed, worked hard to establish her daughter's rights, but her daughter was now of age, and could do as she pleased with her own. She would not even remain in the room while the matter was being discussed. "Lady Anna and I have separate interests," she said haughtily.

Lady Anna herself simply declared that half of her estate should be made over to her cousin, and that the other half should go to her husband. But the attorney was not satisfied to take instructions on a matter of such moment from one so young. As to all that was to appertain to the Earl, the matter was settled. The Solicitor-General and Serjeant Bluestone had acceded to the arrangement, and the Countess herself had given her assent before she had utterly separated her own interests from those of her daughter. In regard to so much, Mr. Goffe could go to work in conjunction with Mr. Flick without a scruple; but as to that other matter there must be

consultations, conferences, and solemn debate. The young lady, no doubt, might do as she pleased; but lawyers can be very powerful. Sir William was asked for his opinion, and suggested that Daniel Thwaite himself should be invited to attend at Mr. Goffe's chambers, as soon as his wound would allow him to do so. Daniel, who did not care for his wound so much as he should have done, was with Mr. Goffe on the following morning, and heard a lengthy explanation from the attorney. The Solicitor-General had been consulted;—this Mr. Goffe said, feeling that a tailor would not have a word to say against so high an authority;—the Solicitor-General had been consulted, and was of opinion that Lady Anna's interests should be guarded with great care. A very large property, he might say a splendid estate, was concerned. Mr. Thwaite of course understood that the family had been averse to this marriage,—naturally very averse. Now, however, they were prepared to yield.

The tailor interrupted the attorney at this period of his speech. "We don't want anybody to yield, Mr. Goffe. We are going to do what we please, and don't know anything about yielding."

Mr. Goffe remarked that all that might be very well, but that, as so large a property was at stake, the friends of the lady, according to all usage, were

bound to interfere. A settlement had already been made in regard to the Earl.

“ You mean, Mr. Goffe, that Lady Anna has given her cousin half her money ? ”

The attorney went on to say that Mr. Thwaite might put it in that way if he pleased. The deeds had already been executed. With regard to the other moiety Mr. Thwaite would no doubt not object to a trust-deed, by which it should be arranged that the money should be invested in land, the interest to be appropriated to the use of Lady Anna, and the property be settled on the eldest son. Mr. Thwaite would, of course, have the advantage of the income during his wife's life. The attorney, in explaining all this, made an exceedingly good legal exposition, and then waited for the tailor's assent.

“ Are those Lady Anna's instructions ? ”

Mr. Goffe replied that the proposal was made in accordance with the advice of the Solicitor-General.

“ I'll have nothing to do with such a settlement,” said the tailor. “ Lady Anna has given away half her money, and may give away the whole if she pleases. She will be the same to me whether she comes full-handed or empty. But when she is my wife her property shall be my property,—and when I die there shall be no such abomination as an eldest son.” Mr. Goffe was persuasive, eloquent,

indignant, and very wise. All experience, all usage, all justice, all tradition, required that there should be some such settlement as he had suggested. But it was in vain. "I don't want my wife to have anything of her own before marriage," said he; "but she certainly shall have nothing after marriage,—independent of me." For a man with sound views of domestic power and marital rights always choose a Radical! In this case there was no staying him. The girl was all on his side, and Mr. Goffe, with infinite grief, was obliged to content himself with binding up a certain portion of the property to make an income for the widow, should the tailor die before his wife. And thus the tailor's marriage received the sanction of all the lawyers.

A day or two after this Daniel Thwaite called upon the Countess. It was now arranged that they should be married early in July, and questions had arisen as to the manner of the ceremony. Who should give away the bride? Of what nature should the marriage be? Should there be any festival? Should there be bridesmaids? Where should they go when they were married? What dresses should be bought? After what fashion should they be prepared to live? Those, and questions of a like nature, required to be answered, and Lady Anna felt that these matters should not be fixed without

some reference to her mother. It had been her most heartfelt desire to reconcile the Countess to the marriage,—to obtain, at any rate, so much recognition as would enable her mother to be present in the church. But the Countess had altogether refused to speak on the subject, and had remained silent, gloomy, and impenetrable. Then Daniel had himself proposed that he would see her, and on a certain morning he called. He sent up his name, with his compliments, and the Countess allowed him to be shown into her room. Lady Anna had begged that it might be so, and she had yielded,—yielded without positive assent, as she had now done in all matters relating to this disastrous marriage. On that morning, however, she had spoken a word. “If Mr. Thwaite chooses to see me, I must be alone.” And she was alone when the tailor was shown into the room. Up to that day he had worn his arm in a sling,—and should then have continued to do so; but, on this visit of peace to her who had attempted to be his murderer, he put aside this outward sign of the injury she had inflicted on him. He smiled as he entered the room, and she rose to receive him. She was no longer a young woman;—and no woman of her age or of any other had gone through rougher usage;—but she could not keep the blood out of her cheeks as

her eyes met his, nor could she summon to her support that hard persistency of outward demeanour with which she had intended to arm herself for the occasion. "So you have come to see me, Mr. Thwaite?" she said.

"I have come, Lady Lovel, to shake hands with you, if it may be so, before my marriage with your daughter. It is her wish that we should be friends, —and mine also." So saying, he put out his hand, and the Countess slowly gave him hers. "I hope the time may come, Lady Lovel, when all animosity may be forgotten between you and me, and nothing be borne in mind but the old friendship of former years."

"I do not know that that can be," she said.

"I hope it may be so. Time cures all things,—and I hope it may be so."

"There are sorrows, Mr. Thwaite, which no time can cure. You have triumphed, and can look forward to the pleasures of success. I have been foiled, and beaten, and broken to pieces. With me the last is worse even than the first. I do not know that I can ever have another friend. Your father was my friend."

"And I would be so also."

"You have been my enemy. All that he did to help me,—all that others have done since to forward

me on my way, has been brought to nothing—by you! My joys have been turned to grief, my rank has been made a disgrace, my wealth has become like ashes between my teeth ;—and it has been your doing. They tell me that you will be my daughter's husband. I know that it must be so. But I do not see that you can be my friend."

"I had hoped to find you softer, Lady Lovel."

"It is not my nature to be soft. All this has not tended to make me soft. If my daughter will let me know from time to time that she is alive, that is all that I shall require of her. As to her future career, I cannot interest myself in it as I had hoped to do. Good-bye, Mr. Thwaite. You need fear no further interference from me."

So the interview was over, and not a word had been said about the attempt at murder.

CHAPTER XLVI.

HARD LINES.

AT the time that the murder was attempted Lord Lovel was in London, — and had seen Daniel Thwaite on that morning ; but before any confirmed rumour had reached his ears he had left London again on his road to Yoxham. He knew now that he would be endowed with something like ten thousand a year out of the wealth of the late Earl, but that he would not have the hand of his fair cousin, the late Earl's daughter. Perhaps it was as well as it was. The girl had never loved him, and he could now choose for himself ;—and need not choose till it should be his pleasure to settle himself as a married man. After all, his marriage with Lady Anna would have been a constrained marriage,—a marriage which he would have accepted as the means of making his fortune. The girl certainly had pleased him ;—but it might be that a girl who preferred a tailor would not have continued

to please him. At any rate he could not be unhappy with his newly-acquired fortune, and he went down to Yoxham to receive the congratulation of his friends, thinking that it would become him now to make some exertion towards reconciling his uncle and aunt to the coming marriage.

“Have you heard anything about Mr. Thwaite?” Mr. Flick said to him the day before he started. The Earl had heard nothing. “They say that he has been wounded by a pistol-ball.” Lord Lovel stayed some days at a friend’s house on his road into Yorkshire, and when he reached the rectory, the rector had received news from London. Mr. Thwaite the tailor had been murdered, and it was surmised that the deed had been done by the Countess. “I trust the papers were signed before you left London,” said the anxious rector. The documents making over the property were all right, but the Earl would believe nothing of the murder. Mr. Thwaite might have been wounded. He had heard so much before,—but he was quite sure that it had not been done by the Countess. On the following day further tidings came. Mr. Thwaite was doing well, but everybody said that the attempt had been made by Lady Lovel. Thus by degrees some idea of the facts as they had occurred was received at the rectory.

“ You don’t mean that you want us to have Mr. Thwaite here ? ” said the rector, holding up his hands, upon hearing a proposition made to him by his nephew a day or two later.

“ Why not, uncle Charles ? ”

“ I couldn’t do it. I really don’t think your aunt could bring herself to sit down to table with him.”

“ Aunt Jane ? ”

“ Yes, your aunt Jane,—or your aunt Julia either.” Now a quieter lady than aunt Jane, or one less likely to turn up her nose at any guest whom her husband should choose to entertain, did not exist.

“ May I ask my aunts ? ”

“ What good can it do, Frederic ? ”

“ He’s going to marry our cousin. He’s not at all such a man as you seem to think.”

“ He has been a journeyman tailor all his life.”

“ You’ll find he’ll make a very good sort of gentleman. Sir William Patterson says that he’ll be in Parliament before long.”

“ Sir William ! Sir William is always meddling. I have never thought much about Sir William.”

“ Come, uncle Charles,—you should be fair. If we had gone on quarrelling and going to law, where should I have been now ? I should never

have got a shilling out of the property. Everybody says so. No doubt Sir William acted very wisely."

"I am no lawyer. I can't say how it might have been. But I may have my doubts if I like. I have always understood that Lady Lovel, as you choose to call her, was never Lord Lovel's wife. For twenty years I have been sure of it, and I can't change so quickly as some other people."

"She is Lady Lovel now. The King and Queen would receive her as such if she went to Court. Her daughter is Lady Anna Lovel."

"It may be so. It is possible."

"If it be not so," said the young lord thumping the table, "where have I got the money from?" This was an argument that the rector could not answer;—so he merely shook his head. "I am bound to acknowledge them after taking her money."

"But not him. You haven't had any of his money. You needn't acknowledge him."

"We had better make the best of it, uncle Charles. He is going to marry our cousin, and we should stand by her. Sir William very strongly advises me to be present at the marriage, and to offer to give her away."

"The girl you were going to marry yourself!"

“Or else that you should do it. That of course would be better.”

The rector of Yoxham groaned when the proposition was made to him. What infinite vexation of spirit and degradation had come to him from these spurious Lovels during the last twelve months! He had been made to have the girl in his house and to give her precedence as Lady Anna, though he did not believe in her; he had been constrained to treat her as the desired bride of his august nephew the Earl,—till she had refused the Earl's hand; after he had again repudiated her and her mother because of her base attachment to a low-born artisan, he had been made to re-accept her in spirit, because she had been generous to his nephew;—and now he was asked to stand at the altar and give her away to the tailor! And there could come to him neither pleasure nor profit from the concern. All that he had endured he had borne simply for the sake of his family and his nephew. “She is degrading us all,—as far as she belongs to us,” said the rector. “I can't see why I should be asked to give her my countenance in doing it.”

“Everybody says that it is very good of her to be true to the man she loved when she was poor and in obscurity. Sir William says——”

“—— Sir William!” muttered the rector between his teeth, as he turned away in disgust. What had been the first word of that minatory speech Lord Lovel did not clearly hear. He had been brought up as a boy by his uncle, and had never known his uncle to offend by swearing. No one in Yoxham would have believed it possible that the parson of the parish should have done so. Mrs. Grimes would have given evidence in any court in Yorkshire that it was absolutely impossible. The archbishop would not have believed it though his archdeacon had himself heard the word. All the man’s known antecedents since he had been at Yoxham were against the probability. The entire close at York would have been indignant had such an accusation been made. But his nephew in his heart of hearts believed that the rector of Yoxham had damned the Solicitor-General.

There was, however, more cause for malediction, and further provocations to wrath, in store for the rector. The Earl had not as yet opened all his budget, or let his uncle know the extent of the sacrifice that was to be demanded from him. Sir William had been very urgent with the young nobleman to accord everything that could be accorded to his cousin. “It is not of course for me to dictate,” he had said, “but as I have been

allowed so far to give advice somewhat beyond the scope of my profession, perhaps you will let me say that in mere honesty you owe her all that you can give. She has shared everything with you, and need have given nothing. And he, my lord, had he been so minded, might no doubt have hindered her from doing what she has done. You owe it to your honour to accept her and her husband with an open hand. Unless you can treat her with cousinly regard you should not have taken what has been given to you as a cousin. She has recognised you to your great advantage as the head of her family, and you should certainly recognise her as belonging to it. Let the marriage be held down at Yoxham. Get your uncle and aunt to ask her down. Do you give her away, and let your uncle marry them. If you can put me up for a night in some neighbouring farm-house, I will come and be a spectator. It will be for your honour to treat her after that fashion." The programme was a large one, and the Earl felt that there might be some difficulty.

.But in the teeth of that dubious malediction he persevered, and his next attack was upon aunt Julia. "You liked her;—did you not?"

"Yes;—I liked her." The tone implied great doubt. "I liked her, till I found that she had forgotten herself."

“But she didn’t forget herself. She just did what any girl would have done, living as she was living. She has behaved nobly to me.”

“She has behaved no doubt conscientiously.”

“Come, aunt Julia! Did you ever know any other woman to give away ten thousand a-year to a fellow simply because he was her cousin? We should do something for her. Why should you not ask her down here again?”

“I don’t think my brother would like it.”

“He will if you tell him. And we must make a gentleman of him.”

“My dear Frederic, you can never wash a black-moor white.”

“Let us try. Don’t you oppose it. It behoves me, for my honour, to show her some regard after what she has done for me.”

Aunt Julia shook her head, and muttered to herself some further remark about negroes. The inhabitants of the Yoxham rectory,—who were well born, ladies and gentlemen without a stain, who were hitherto free from all base intermarriages, and had nothing among their male cousins below soldiers and sailors, parsons and lawyers, who had successfully opposed an intended marriage between a cousin in the third degree and an attorney because the alliance was below the level of the Lovels, were

peculiarly averse to any intermingling of ranks. They were descended from ancient earls, and their chief was an earl of the present day. There was but one titled young lady now among them,—and she had only just won her right to be so considered. There was but one Lady Anna,—and she was going to marry a tailor! “Duty is duty,” said aunt Julia as she hurried away. She meant her nephew to understand that duty commanded her to shut her heart against any cousin who could marry a tailor.

The lord next attacked aunt Jane. “You wouldn’t mind having her here?”

“Not if your uncle thought well of it,” said Mrs. Lovel.

“I’ll tell you what my scheme is.” Then he told it all. Lady Anna was to be invited to the rectory. The tailor was to be entertained somewhere near on the night preceding his wedding. The marriage was to be celebrated by his uncle in Yoxham Church. Sir William was to be asked to join them. And the whole thing was to be done exactly as though they were all proud of the connection.

“Does your uncle know?” asked Mrs. Lovel, who had been nearly stunned by the proposition.

“Not quite. I want you to suggest it. Only think, aunt Jane, what she has done for us all!”

Aunt Jane couldn't think that very much had been done for her. They were not to be enriched by the cousin's money. They had never been interested in the matter on their own account. They wanted nothing. And yet they were to be called upon to have a tailor at their board,—because Lord Lovel was the head of their family. But the Earl was the Earl; and poor Mrs. Lovel knew how much she owed to his position. “If you wish it of course I'll tell him, Frederic.”

“I do wish it;—and I'll be so much obliged to you.”

The next morning the parson had been told all that was required of him, and he came down to prayers as black as a thunder-cloud. It had been before suggested to him that he should give the bride away, and though he had grievously complained of the request, he knew that he must do it should the Earl still demand it. He had no power to oppose the head of the family. But he had never thought then that he would be asked to pollute his own rectory by the presence of that odious tailor. While he was shaving that morning very religious ideas had filled his mind. What a horrible thing was wickedness! All this evil had come upon him and his because the late Earl had been so very wicked a man! He had sworn to his wife that he would not bear it. He had

done and was ready to do more almost than any other uncle in England. But this he could not endure. Yet when he was shaving, and thinking with religious horror of the iniquities of that iniquitous old lord, he knew that he would have to yield. "I dare say they wouldn't come," said aunt Julia. "He won't like to be with us any more than we shall like to have him." There was some comfort in that hope; and trusting to it the rector had yielded everything before the third day was over.

"And I may ask Sir William?" said the Earl.

"Of course we shall be glad to see Sir William Patterson if you choose to invite him," said the rector, still oppressed by gloom. "Sir William Patterson is a gentleman no doubt, and a man of high standing. Of course I and your aunt will be pleased to receive him. As a lawyer I don't think much of him;—but that has nothing to do with it." It may be remarked here that though Mr. Lovel lived for a great many years after the transactions which are here recorded, he never gave way in reference to the case that had been tried. If the lawyers had persevered as they ought to have done, it would have been found out that the Countess was no Countess, that the Lady Anna was no Lady Anna, and that all the money had belonged by right to the Earl. With that belief,—with that profes-

sion of belief,—he went to his grave an old man of eighty.

In the meantime he consented that the invitation should be given. The Countess and her daughter were to be asked to Yoxham;—the use of the parish church was to be offered for the ceremony; he was to propose to marry them; the Earl was to give the bride away; and Daniel Thwaite the tailor was to be asked to dine at Yoxham Rectory on the day before the marriage! The letters were to be written from the rectory by aunt Julia, and the Earl was to add what he pleased for himself. “I suppose this sort of trial is sent to us for our good,” said the rector to his wife that night in the sanctity of their bedroom.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THINGS ARRANGE THEMSELVES.

BUT the Countess never gave way an inch. The following was the answer which she returned to the note written to her by aunt Julia ;—

“The Countess Lovel presents her compliments to Miss Lovel. The Countess disapproves altogether of the marriage which is about to take place between Lady Anna Lovel and Mr. Daniel Thwaite, and will take no part in the ceremony.”

“By heavens,—she is the best Lovel of us all,” said the rector when he read the letter.

This reply was received at Yoxham three days before any answer came either from Lady Anna or from the tailor. Daniel had received his communication from the young lord, who had called him “Dear Mr. Thwaite,” who had written quite familiarly about the coming nuptials with “his cousin Anna,”—had bade him come down and join the family “like a good fellow,”—and had signed

himself, "Yours always most sincerely, Lovel."
"It almost takes my breath away," said the tailor to his sweetheart, laughing.

"They are cousins, you know," said Lady Anna. "And there was a little girl there I loved so much."

"They can't but despise me, you know," said the tailor.

"Why should any one despise you?"

"No one should,—unless I be mean and despicable. But they do,—you may be sure. It is only human nature that they should. We are made of different fabric,—though the stuff was originally the same. I don't think I should be at my ease with them. I should be half afraid of their gilt and their gingerbread, and should be ashamed of myself because I was so. I should not know how to drink wine with them, and should do a hundred things which would make them think me a beast."

"I don't see why you shouldn't hold up your head with any man in England," said Lady Anna.

"And so I ought;—but I shouldn't. I should be awed by those whom I feel to be my inferiors. I had rather not. We had better keep to ourselves, dear!" But the girl begged for some delay. It was a matter that required to be considered. If it were necessary for her to quarrel with all her cousins

for the sake of her husband, — with the bright faintéant young Earl, with aunts Jane and Julia, with her darling Minnie, she would do so. The husband should be to her in all respects the first and foremost. For his sake, now that she had resolved that she would be his, she would if necessary separate herself from all the world. She had withstood the prayers of her mother, and she was sure that nothing else could move her. But if the cousins were willing to accept her husband, why should he not be willing to be accepted? Pride in him might be as weak as pride in them. If they would put out their hands to him, why should he refuse to put out his own? “Give me a day, Daniel, to think about it.” He gave her the day, and then that great decider of all things, Sir William, came to him, congratulating him, bidding him be of good cheer, and saying fine things of the Lovel family generally. Our tailor received him courteously, having learned to like the man, understanding that he had behaved with honesty and wisdom in regard to his client, and respecting him as one of the workers of the day; but he declared that for the Lovel family, as a family, — “he did not care for them particularly.” “They are poles asunder from me,” he said.

“Not so,” replied Sir William. “They were poles asunder, if you will. But by your good for-

tune and merit, if you will allow me to say so, you have travelled from the one pole very far towards the other."

"I like my own pole a deal the best, Sir William."

"I am an older man than you, Mr. Thwaite, and allow me to assure you that you are wrong."

"Wrong in preferring those who work for their bread to those who eat it in idleness?"

"Not that;—but wrong in thinking that there is not hard work done at the one pole as well as the other; and wrong also in not having perceived that the best men who come up from age to age are always migrating from that pole which you say you prefer, to the antipodean pole to which you are tending yourself. I can understand your feeling of contempt for an idle lordling, but you should remember that lords have been made lords in nine cases out of ten for good work done by them for the benefit of their country."

"Why should the children of lords be such to the tenth and twentieth generation?"

"Come into parliament, Mr. Thwaite, and if you have views on that subject opposed to hereditary peerages, express them there. It is a fair subject for argument. At present, I think that the sense of the country is in favour of an aristocracy of birth.

But be that as it may, do not allow yourself to despise that condition of society which it is the ambition of all men to enter."

"It is not my ambition."

"Pardon me. When you were a workman among workmen, did you not wish to be their leader? When you were foremost among them, did you not wish to be their master? If you were a master tradesman, would you not wish to lead and guide your brother tradesmen? Would you not desire wealth in order that you might be assisted by it in your views of ambition? If you were an alderman in your borough, would you not wish to be the mayor? If mayor, would you not wish to be its representative in Parliament? If in Parliament, would you not wish to be heard there? Would you not then clothe yourself as those among whom you lived, eat as they ate, drink as they drank, keep their hours, fall into their habits, and be one of them? The theory of equality is very grand."

"The grandest thing in the world, Sir William."

"It is one to which all legislative and all human efforts should and must tend. All that is said and all that is done among people that have emancipated themselves from the thralldom of individual aggrandizement, serve to diminish in some degree the dis-

tance between the high and the low. But could you establish absolute equality in England tomorrow, as it was to have been established in France some half century ago, the inequality of men's minds and character would re-establish an aristocracy within twenty years. The energetic, the talented, the honest, and the unselfish will always be moving towards an aristocratic side of society, because their virtues will beget esteem, and esteem will beget wealth,—and wealth gives power for good offices."

"As when one man throws away forty thousand a year on race-courses."

"When you make much water boil, Mr. Thwaite, some of it will probably boil over. When two men run a race, some strength must be wasted in fruitless steps beyond the goal. It is the fault of many patriotic men that, in their desire to put down the evils which exist they will see only the power that is wasted, and have no eyes for the good work done. The subject is so large that I should like to discuss it with you when we have more time. For the present let me beg of you, for your own sake as well as for her who is to be your wife, that you will not repudiate civility offered to you by her family. It will show a higher manliness in you to go among them, and accept among them the position which

your wife's wealth and your own acquirements will give you, than to stand aloof moodily because they are aristocrats."

"You can make yourself understood when you speak, Sir William."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the lawyer, smiling.

"I cannot, and so you have the best of me. But you can't make me like a lord, or think that a young man ought to wear a silk gown."

"I quite agree with you that the silk gowns should be kept for their elders," and so the conversation was ended.

Daniel Thwaite had not been made to like a lord, but the eloquence of the urbane lawyer was not wasted on him. Thinking of it all as he wandered alone through the streets, he began to believe that it would be more manly to do as he was advised than to abstain because the doing of the thing would in itself be disagreeable to him. On the following day, Lady Anna was with him as usual; for the pretext of his wound still afforded to her the means of paying to him those daily visits which in happier circumstances he would naturally have paid to her. "Would you like to go to Yoxham?" he said. She looked wistfully up into his face. With her there was a real wish that the poles might be

joined together by her future husband. She had found, as she had thought of it, that she could not make herself either happy or contented except by marrying him, but it had not been without regret that she had consented to destroy altogether the link which bound her to the noble blood of the Lovels. She had been made to appreciate the sweet flavour of aristocratic influences, and now that the Lovels were willing to receive her in spite of her marriage, she was more than willing to accept their offered friendship. "If you really wish it, you shall go," he said.

"But you must go also."

"Yes;—for one day. And I must have a pair of gloves and a black coat."

"And a blue one,—to be married in."

"Alas me! Must I have a pink silk gown to walk about in, early in the morning?"

"You shall if you like, and I'll make it for you."

"I'd sooner see you darning my worsted stockings, sweetheart."

"I can do that too."

"And I shall have to go to church in a coach, and come back in another, and all the people will smell sweet, and make eyes at me behind my back, and wonder among themselves how the tailor will behave himself."

“The tailor must behave himself properly,” said Lady Anna.

“That’s just what he won’t do,—and can’t do. I know you’ll be ashamed of me, and then we shall both be unhappy.”

“I won’t be ashamed of you. I will never be ashamed of you. I will be ashamed of them if they are not good to you. But, Daniel, you shall not go if you do not like it. What does it all signify, if you are not happy?”

“I will go,” said he. “And now I’ll sit down and write a letter to my lord.”

Two letters were written accepting the invitation. As that from the tailor to the lord was short and characteristic it shall be given.

“MY DEAR LORD,

“I am much obliged to you for your lordship’s invitation to Yoxham, and if accepting it will make me a good fellow, I will accept it. I fear, however, that I can never be a proper fellow to your lordship. Not the less do I feel your courtesy, and I am,

“With all sincerity,

“Your lordship’s very obedient servant,

“DANIEL THWAITE.”

Lady Anna's reply to aunt Julia was longer and less sententious, but it signified her intention of going down to Yoxham a week before the day settled for the marriage, which was now the 10th of July. She was much obliged, she said, to the rector for his goodness in promising to marry them; and as she had no friends of her own she hoped that Minnie Lovel would be her bridesmaid. There were, however, sundry other letters before the ceremony was performed, and among them was one in which she was asked to bring Miss Alice Bluestone down with her,—so that she might have one bridesmaid over and beyond those provided by the Yoxham aristocracy. To this arrangement Miss Alice Bluestone acceded joyfully,—in spite of that gulf, of which she had spoken;—and, so accompanied, but without her lady's-maid, Lady Anna returned to Yoxham that she might be there bound in holy matrimony to Daniel Thwaite the tailor, by the hands of her cousin, the Rev. Charles Lovel.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MARRIAGE.

THE marriage was nearly all that a marriage should be when a Lady Anna is led to the hymeneal altar. As the ceremony was transferred from Bloomsbury, London, to Yoxham, in Yorkshire, a licence had been procured, and the banns of which Daniel Thwaite thought so much, had been called in vain. Of course there are differences in aristocratic marriages. All earls' daughters are not married at St. George's, Hanover Square, nor is it absolutely necessary that a bishop should tie the knot, or that the dresses should be described in a newspaper. This was essentially a quiet marriage,—but it was quiet with a splendid quietude, and the obscurity of it was graceful and decorous. As soon as the thing was settled,—when it was a matter past doubt that all the Lovels were to sanction the marriage,—the two aunts went to work heartily. Another Lovel girl, hardly more than seen before by any of the

family, was gathered to the Lovel home as a third bridesmaid, and for the fourth,—who should officiate, but the eldest daughter of Lady Fitzwarren? The Fitzwarrens were not rich, did not go to town annually, and the occasions for social brilliancy in the country are few and far between! Lady Fitzwarren did not like to refuse her old friend, Mrs. Lovel; and then Lady Anna was Lady Anna,—or at any rate would be so, as far as the newspapers of the day were concerned. Miss Fitzwarren allowed herself to be attired in white and blue, and to officiate in the procession,—having, however, assured her most intimate friend, Miss De Moleyns, that no consideration on earth should induce her to allow herself to be kissed by the tailor.

In the week previous to the arrival of Daniel Thwaite, Lady Anna again ingratiated herself with the ladies at the rectory. During the days of her persecution she had been silent and apparently hard;—but now she was again gentle, yielding, and soft. “I do like her manner, all the same,” said Minnie. “Yes, my dear. It’s a pity that it should be as it is to be, because she is very nice.” Minnie loved her friend, but thought it to be a thing of horror that her friend should marry a tailor. It was almost as bad as the story of the Princess who had to marry a bear;—worse indeed, for Minnie did not at all

believe that the tailor would ever turn out to be a gentleman, whereas she had been sure from the first that the bear would turn into a prince.

Daniel came to Yoxham, and saw very little of anybody at the rectory. He was taken in at the house of a neighbouring squire, where he dined as a matter of course. He did call at the rectory, and saw his bride,—but on that occasion he did not even see the rector. The squire took him to the church in the morning, dressed in a blue frock coat, brown trousers, and a grey cravat. He was very much ashamed of his own clothes, but there was nothing about him to attract attention had not everybody known he was a tailor. The rector shook hands with him politely but coldly. The ladies were more affectionate; and Minnie looked up into his face long and anxiously. “He wasn’t very nice,” she said afterwards, “but I thought he’d be worse than that!” When the marriage was over he kissed his wife, but made no attempt upon the bridesmaids. Then there was a breakfast at the rectory,—which was a very handsome bridal banquet. On such occasions the part of the bride is always easily played. It is her duty to look pretty if she can, and should she fail in that,—as brides usually do,—her failure is attributed to the natural emotions of the occasion. The part of the bridegroom is more difficult. He

should be manly, pleasant, composed, never flippant, able to say a few words when called upon, and quietly triumphant. This is almost more than mortal can achieve, and bridegrooms generally manifest some shortcomings at the awful moment. Daniel Thwaite was not successful. He was silent and almost morose. When Lady Fitzwarren congratulated him with high-flown words and a smile,—a smile that was intended to combine something of ridicule with something of civility,—he almost broke down in his attempt to answer her. “It is very good of you, my lady,” said he. Then she turned her back and whispered a word to the parson, and Daniel was sure that she was laughing at him. The hero of the day was the Solicitor-General. He made a speech, proposing health and prosperity to the newly-married couple. He referred, but just referred, to the trial, expressing the pleasure which all concerned had felt in recognising the rights and rank of the fair and noble bride as soon as the facts of the case had come to their knowledge. Then he spoke of the truth and long-continued friendship and devoted constancy of the bridegroom and his father, saying that in the long experience of his life he had known nothing more touching or more graceful than the love which in early days had sprung up between the beautiful young girl and her

earliest friend. He considered it to be among the happinesses of his life that he had been able to make the acquaintance of Mr. Daniel Thwaite, and he expressed a hope that he might long be allowed to regard that gentleman as his friend. There was much applause, in giving which the young Earl was certainly the loudest. The rector could not bring himself to say a word. He was striving to do his duty by the head of his family, but he could not bring himself to say that the marriage between Lady Anna Lovel and the tailor was a happy event. Poor Daniel was compelled to make some speech in reply to his friend, Sir William. "I am bad at speaking," said he, "and I hope I shall be excused. I can only say that I am under deep obligation to Sir William Patterson for what he has done for my wife."

The couple went away with a carriage and four horses to York, and the marriage was over. "I hope I have done right," said the rector in whispered confidence to Lady Fitzwarren.

"I think you have, Mr. Lovel. I'm sure you have. The circumstances were very difficult, but I am sure you have done right. She must always be considered as the legitimate child of her father."

"They say so," murmured the rector sadly.

“Just that. And as she will always be considered to be the Lady Anna, you were bound to treat her as you have done. It was a pity that it was not done earlier, so that she might have formed a worthier connection. The Earl, however, has not been altogether overlooked, and there is some comfort in that. I dare say Mr. Thwaite may be a good sort of man, though he is—not just what the family could have wished.” These words were undoubtedly spoken by her ladyship with much pleasure. The Fitzwarrens were poor, and the Lovels were all rich. Even the young Earl was now fairly well to do in the world,—thanks to the generosity of the newly-found cousin. It was, therefore, pleasant to Lady Fitzwarren to allude to the family misfortune which must in some degree alloy the prosperity of her friends. Mr. Lovel understood it all, and sighed; but he felt no anger. He was grateful to Lady Fitzwarren for coming to his house at all on so mournful an occasion.

And so we may bid farewell to Yoxham. The rector was an honest, sincere man, unselfish, true to his instincts, genuinely English, charitable, hospitable, a doer of good to those around him. In judging of such a character we find the difficulty of drawing the line between political sagacity and political prejudice. Had he been other than he

was, he would probably have been less serviceable in his position.

The bride and bridegroom went for their honeymoon into Devonshire, and on their road they passed through London. Lady Anna Thwaite,—for she had not at least as yet been able to drop her title,—wrote to her mother telling her of her arrival, and requesting permission to see her. On the following day she went alone to Keppel Street and was admitted. “Dear, dear mamma,” she said, throwing herself into the arms of her mother.

“So it is done?” said the Countess.

“Yes;—mamma,—we are married. I wrote to you from York.”

“I got your letter, but I could not answer it. What could I say? I wish it had not been so;—but it is done. You have chosen for yourself, and I will not reproach you.”

“Do not reproach me now, mamma.”

“It would be useless. I will bear my sorrows in silence, such as they are. Do not talk to me of him, but tell me what is the life that is proposed for you.”

They were to stay in the south of Devonshire for a month and then to sail for the new colony founded at the Antipodes. As to any permanent mode of life no definite plan had yet been formed. They were bound for Sydney, and when there, “my husband,”

—as Lady Anna called him, thinking that the word might be less painful to the ears of her mother than the name of the man who had become so odious to her,—would do as should seem good to him. They would at any rate learn something of the new world that was springing up, and he would then be able to judge whether he would best serve the purpose that he had at heart by remaining there or by returning to England. “And now, mamma, what will you do?”

“Nothing,” said the Countess.

“But where will you live?”

“If I could only find out, my child, where I might die, I would tell you that.”

“Mamma, do not talk to me of dying.”

“How should I talk of my future life, my dear? For what should I live? I had but you, and you have left me.”

“Come with me, mamma.”

“No, my dear. I could not live with him nor he with me. It will be better that he and I should never see each other again.”

“But you will not stay here?”

“No;—I shall not stay here. I must use myself to solitude, but the solitude of London is unendurable. I shall go back to Cumberland if I can find a home there. The mountains will remind me of the

days which, sad as they were, were less sad than the present. I little dreamed then when I had gained everything my loss would be so great as it has been. Was the Earl there?"

"At our marriage? Oh yes, he was there."

"I shall ask him to do me a kindness. Perhaps he will let me live at Lovel Grange?"

When the meeting was over Lady Anna returned to her husband overwhelmed with tears. She was almost broken-hearted when she asked herself whether she had in truth been cruel to her mother. But she knew not how she could have done other than she had done. Her mother had endeavoured to conquer her by hard usage,—and had failed. But not the less her heart was very sore. "My dear," said the tailor to her, "hearts will be sore. As the world goes yet awhile there must be injustice; and sorrow will follow."

When they had been gone from London about a month the Countess wrote to her cousin the Earl and told him her wishes. "If you desire to live there of course there must be an end of it. But if not, you might let the old place to me. It will not be as if it were gone out of the family. I will do what I can for the people around me, so that they may learn not to hate the name of Lovel."

The young lord told her that she should have the

use of the house as long as she pleased,—for her lifetime if it suited her to live there so long. As for rent,—of course he could take none after all that had been done for him. But the place should be leased to her so that she need not fear to be disturbed. When the spring time came, after the sailing of the vessel which took the tailor and his wife off to the Antipodes, Lady Lovel travelled down with her maid to Cumberland, leaving London without a friend to whom she could say adieu. And at Lovel Grange she took up her abode, amidst the old furniture and the old pictures, with everything to remind her of the black tragedy of her youth, when her husband had come to her and had told her, with a smile upon his lips and scorn in his eye, that she was not his wife, and that the child which she bore would be a bastard. Over his wicked word she had at any rate triumphed. Now she was living there in his house the unquestioned and undoubted Countess Lovel, the mistress of much of his wealth, while still were living around her those who had known her when she was banished from her home. There, too often with ill-directed generosity, she gave away her money, and became loved of the poor around her. But in the way of society she saw no human being, and rarely went

beyond the valley in which stood the lonely house to which she had been brought as a bride.

Of the further doings of Mr. Daniel Thwaite and his wife Lady Anna,—of how they travelled and saw many things; and how he became perhaps a wiser man,—the present writer may, he hopes, live to tell.

THE END.







